

ARAB MUSLIM INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES
IN A U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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by
MICHELLE E. ABUALKHAIR

B.A., University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2006
M.A., University of Connecticut, 2009

Kansas City, Missouri
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Michelle E. Abualkhair, Candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree
University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2013

ABSTRACT

Arab Muslim international students face challenges while completing higher education degrees in the Western countries due to diversity in culture, socialization, language, and educational systems (Abukhattala, 2004; Mostafa, 2006, Seggi & Sanford, 2010). This narrative study examined the lived experiences of eight Arab Muslim international students as they attended a higher education in the U.S. including their descriptions of their experiences with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty. Guiding questions presented to participants include: (1) How do they describe their experiences as Arab Muslim international students attending a U.S. university?; (2) How do they describe their overall experiences studying at a U.S. university?; and (3) How do they describe their classroom experiences at a U.S. university?

Data of narrative journals and follow-up interviews revealed that Arab Muslim international students describe the U.S. university is welcoming to diversity; a struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices while in the U.S.; challenges with academic development including completion of assignments, oral class discussions, and interactions with faculty in English; and positive perceptions of the U.S. higher education's pedagogical and curricular approaches and practices. Conclusions drawn from this study suggest that U.S. higher

education institutions and faculty can act as “cultural brokers” by designing curricular and pedagogical practices that are culturally relevant to diverse students’ needs including demonstrate more personal interactions with Arab Muslim international students; demonstrate patience in efforts to accommodate academic and language challenges experienced by international students; and improve an understanding of Muslim students’ beliefs and practices in order to better serve their diverse needs.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies have examined a dissertation titled “Arab Muslim International Students’ Lived Experiences in a U.S. Higher Education Institution,” presented by Michelle E. Abualkhair, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Omiunota N. Ukpokodu, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Douglas Bowles, Ph.D.
Department of Economics

Theresa L. Torres, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology

Candace M. Schlein, Ph.D.
Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Carolyn E. Barber, Ph.D.
Department of Counseling & Educational Psychology

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to a 2011 report by the Institute of International Education (IIE b), the number of international students who study in U.S. higher education institutions has increased by 4.7% totaling an enrollment of 723,277 during the 2010-2011 academic year (2011b, p. 1) . “Enrollment of international students has overcome a four-year flat or declining growth that began in 2002-03 and reflected concerns about safety and U.S. immigration policies after the 9/11 terrorist attacks” (Markelin, 2011, p. 1). International student enrollment rose over the past decade by 32% (IIEb, 2011, p. 1). Assistant secretary of state Ann Stock stresses, “Young people who study abroad gain the global skills necessary to create solutions to twenty-first century challenges” (IIEb, 2011, p. 2). International students are non-U.S. students who come to the U.S. on a temporary student visa to complete undergraduate, graduate, or professional degrees and then return to their home countries. International students have been described as one of the brightest and most motivated groups of students in U.S. universities. They come to the U.S. with goals to improve their lives via educational and economic opportunities available in the U.S. or to study fields that are not available in their home countries (IIE, 2009).

Mostafa (2006) provides that Arab Muslim international students choose to study abroad as a result of both “push and pull factors”. “Push factors” refers to factors in the home country in which students perceive as inadequate including few graduate or doctoral programs of study; few high-standard educational institutions; poor economic resources or funds; lack of participation of graduates in global economy; few career opportunities for graduates; poor political or social conditions; and little availability of specialized disciplines of study. In contrast, “pull factors”

refers to factors in the host country in which students perceive as advantageous such as satisfactory availability of graduate or doctoral programs of study; advanced academic and technological facilities; enhanced economic resources or funds; abundant high-standard educational institutions; active participation of graduates in global economy; increased career opportunities for graduates; prestige of receiving a degree from foreign country; interactions with diverse cultures; and wide availability of specialized disciplines of study (Mostafa, 2006, pp. 36-37).

Once students decide to leave their homes to study abroad, where do they choose to study? According to the Institute of International Education, the U.S. is the top destination for international students to study. More than 2,500 colleges and universities in the U.S. host international students (IIE, 2009), while nearly 170 of those universities are home to an international student population of more than 1,000 students (IIE, 2009, p. 1). Based on these figures, it is safe to infer that U.S. universities are becoming international institutions as international students create a multicultural global environment on campuses across the U.S. In response to this increasing diversity, it the mission of many U.S. universities to provide equitable educational opportunities to international students to strengthen universities' commitments to globalization and sustainability of world peace (IIE, 2009). Allan Goodman, President of Institute of International Education, stresses the significant contributions of international students in U.S. universities as including contributing to the U.S.'s long-term global competitive edge; making significant offerings to research; providing diverse perspectives within the classroom; acting as "cultural brokers" between their home countries and the U.S.; and strengthening the U.S. economy (IIE, 2009). Goodman further expresses, "Educational exchange in both directions furthers business and cultural ties between the United States and other countries" (IIE, 2011b, p.

2). In addition, IIE (2011b, p. 1) reports that international education in the U.S. strengthens the U.S. economy as over \$21 billion is spent on tuition on campus as well as additional living expenses off campus by international students or their host country governments via scholarships.

Given the number of international students in the U.S. as well as the economic benefits from international education, it is beneficial for higher education institutions to better understand who they are hosting in terms of international students' personal, social, and academic experiences at U.S. universities. This study defines Arab Muslim international students as (1) an Arab whose familial ties with one of the Arab nation states of the Middle East, Arabian Gulf, and parts of Africa and native language includes Arabic (Britto, 2008; Watt & Cachia, 2010); (2) a Muslim who declares, the Shahada "There is no God except Allah. And Mohammad is the messenger of God" and believes his or her duty is to give complete submission to the will of God (Islamicity, 2011); and (3) an international students who holds an F1 visa and is seeking a higher education degree at a U.S. higher education institution (IIE, 2009).

Much research is available regarding cultural adjustment experiences of international students in the U.S. due to differences in culture, language, and educational systems (Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Rocha-Tracy, 2009; Sharma, 2008). In addition, much of research that has been conducted on the linguistic, curricular, and cultural experiences of Arab Muslim international students have been in Canada and less in the U.S. (Abukhattala, 2004; Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Britto, 2008; Mostafa, 2006; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Shamma, 2009). Much of the existing research has been approached from a sociological or social science position. However, this study applied an interdisciplinary approach between the education and social science disciplines to capture the rich, genuine descriptions of the socio-cultural as well as

academic-linguistic contexts of international students' collegiate experiences. With this understanding, a study that expresses international students' voices through qualitative narratives that describe those experiences is needed to develop a better understanding of the lives of international students living in foreign countries.

Problem Statement

During the 2010-2011 academic-year, 42,543 students from the Middle East including the Arabian Gulf countries studied as international students at U.S. higher education institutions. In addition, 41.8 percent of those students were undergraduates, while 58.2 percent were graduate or professional students (Institute of International Education, 2011a, p. 1). The number of Arab Muslim international students from the Middle East and Arabian Gulf region rose by 16% during the 2009-2010 academic-year with specific increases from Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Iran, and Saudi Arabia (IIE, 2010, p. 1). In fact, students from Saudi Arabia make up three to four percent of the total international student enrollment in the U.S. (IIE, 2011b, p. 2). "Saudi Arabia moved up to number six this year, with an increase of 44 percent, due primarily to the large Saudi government scholarship program that has been ramping up over the past few years" (IIE, 2011b, pp. 2-3).

Research has found factors such as perceptions of discrimination and prejudice (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, p. 28; Read, 2008, p. 39; Sharma, 2008, p. 246) ; difficulties establishing social relationships (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006, p. 79; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, p. 28, Seggie & Sanford, 2010, pp. 70-71) ; feelings of not belonging due to cultural differences (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006, p. 73); feelings of isolation (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, p. 28); perceptions of exclusion and marginalization (Seggie & Sanford, 2010, p. 59); conflicts due to biased representation of Arabs and Muslims in curricular materials (Britto, 2008, p. 55); and difficulties

with English language use at Canadian higher education institutions (Abukhattala, 2004; Mostafa, 2006) contribute to sustained negative collegiate experiences of Arab Muslim international students at U.S. and Canadian higher education institutions. Based on this awareness, this study aimed to gain insight of the unique experiences Arab Muslim international students face while completing their degrees at U.S. higher education institutions. Genuine descriptions of Arab Muslim international students' experiences as narrated through their voices assisted in better understanding this phenomenon.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine international student population's educational experiences in effort to better meet their collegiate needs. Striving to better understand the lives of international students in the U.S., this narrative inquiry based dissertation aimed to examine through interdisciplinary perspectives how eight Arab Muslim international students describe their lived experiences in U.S. higher education relative to experiences with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty.

Research Questions

The central research question that directed this study was what are Arab Muslim international students' experiences with higher education in the U.S.? Subquestions include: (1) How do they describe the university curriculum style in the U.S.?; (2) What are their experiences with academic development and competencies while attending courses in the U.S. higher education institution?; (3) How do they describe their relationships and interactions with faculty in the U.S.?; and (4) How do they describe the university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S.? An outline of the theoretical framework that supported this study is as follows.

Theoretical Framework

Brent Kilbourn (2006) describes the purpose of the theoretical framework for an academic study as follows.

A fundamental assumption for any academic research is that the phenomena (data) that we wish to understand are filtered through a point of view (theoretical perspective)—that is to say, it is assumed that there is no such thing as a value-free or unbiased or correct interpretation of an event. (p. 17)

Theoretical perspectives that built the theoretical framework of this inquiry include (a) socio-cultural theory of learning; (b) multicultural curricular theory; (c) identity development theory; and (d) critical race theory.

Socio-cultural Theory of Learning

Psychologist Vygotsky's (1978) posts that cognitive development stems from social interaction and social development. Second, each individual's cognitive development is bounded by one's "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). Vygotsky further provides that within the zone of proximal development, students may be cognitively capable, but require the assistance of teachers or more experienced peers in a social setting. Moreover, problem solving can be more effective when students negotiate the meaning of both language and content (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, learning and intellectual development occurs within the framework of social relationships and can not take place in isolation. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory further provides that since social interactions are culturally distinct and learning takes place within the context of social relationships, learning is social. Based on this concept, if instructional practices do not match students' cultural backgrounds and are not meaningful to them, students' may face obstacles to learning. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory influences this study as Arab Muslim international

students are diverse students whose background knowledge and cultural experiences differ from the mainstream American college student population. In addition, socio-cultural theory's focus on negotiation of meaning of both content and language compliments this study of culturally and linguistically diverse students well.

Given that culture is central to understanding socio-cultural theory, it is important to define culture. Gay (2000, p. 8) defines culture as a “dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others”. Gay explains that although we may not be aware of it, culture influences how we behave, think, and believe. Thus, she echoes Vygostky's notion of cultural influences on how we teach and learn. Banks and Banks (2010) define culture as formed from human actions and can be used as a tool to carry out life activities. Therefore, “all thoughts, feelings, and human activity are not simply natural but are the result of historical and personal experiences that become sedimented as culture in habit” (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 37).

Considering that different groups have unique cultural patterns, people may experience differences as they cross borders and in the process may experience what sociologist Kalervo Oberg calls “culture shock” (Oberg, 1960). Culture shock refers to the course of adjustment when encountering a new environment and consists of three stages. The first “Honeymoon Stage” occurs during the first couple of weeks in a foreign country when an individual tends to undergo an attraction to the diverse new culture (Oberg, 1960, p. 177). The second “Negotiation or Disintegration Stage” takes place when an individual acknowledges he or she must live within the new culture. Some may experience unfriendly or aggressive feelings during this stage towards the new culture and its people (Oberg, 1960, p. 179). The third “Adjustment Stage” refers to when a person begins to accept his or new culture and society. During this stage, if one

were to return to his or her home country, he may experience “reverse culture shock” since he has adjusted to his new cultural environment (Oberg, 1960, p. 180). The concept of culture shock relates to Arab Muslim international students who come from non-Western cultures to study within a Western cultural environment in the U.S. In addition to facing cultural differences in the U.S., participants of this study face linguistic diversity as well considering their first language is Arabic while their second language is English. For this reason, the second language acquisition theory by Vivion Cook (2001) known as the multi-competence second language acquisition theory is discussed next.

Multi-competence second language acquisition theory. The multi-competence second language acquisition theory posts that second language users’ knowledge can never be the same as that of a native speaker (Cook, 2001). The multi-competence theory asserts that rather than measuring how native-like second language users speak, we should recognize “...their unique status as people who can function in two cultures” (Cook, 2001, p. 196). Hence, teachers and students should understand that the goal of second language learning is how successful students are as second language users rather than how native-like they speak. The multi-competence language theory further guided this study of Arab Muslim international students who are second language users while pursuing their higher education degrees in the U.S., yet have a background in learning English as a foreign language from their home countries.

Multicultural Education Curricular Theory

Oakes and Lipton (2007) offer that multicultural approaches in educational curricula began during the 1970s followed by socio-cultural perspectives as alternative methods to traditional, behavioral, and essentialist philosophies in education. Multicultural and socio-cultural approaches origins are found in progressivism and social reconstructionism. However, rather

than view knowledge as “discovered” as under progressivism and social reconstructionism, multicultural and socio-cultural methods perceives knowledge as “created” as the purpose of education is to improve the world for everyone (Oakes & Lipton, 2007). Oakes and Lipton (2007) additionally provide that multiculturalists and socio-cultural curricular principles include school curriculums should be socially democratic in nature and curriculums’ content should match students’ learning and cognition styles. The outcome of these principles is a rigorous, culturally inclusive, and accessible curriculum for all students. Multicultural education curriculum was also established to counter racism and promote civil rights by promoting the ideal of students who are culturally different are not culturally deprived. In order to promote this standard, multicultural education curricula work to enable students to look at the world from diverse cultural groups’ perspectives (Oakes & Lipton, 2007) which relates to culturally diverse Arab Muslim international students. Social identity development theory is the third branch that frames this study’s theoretical framework.

Social Identity Development

Social identity development theory established by social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner proposes that an individual’s identity is based on one’s membership or sense of belonging to a particular social group such as a religious, professional, or ethnic group (Tajfel, & Turner, 1986). An individual’s self-concept is based on the value or attachment one places on membership to a particular social group. Therefore, group identification influences one’s self-worth (Lewin, 1948). The notion of membership identity is instrumental to international Arab Muslim students who leave their families in their home countries and may forge bonds with members of their ethnic community in the new country as well as with university peers which can develop or possibly alter their identities. Hence, participants develop professional/academic

memberships, ethnic memberships, and religious memberships as they pursue their higher education degrees in the U.S. One form of societal membership in which participants develop is ethnic memberships as they create their newly recognized ethnic identities in the U.S.

Ethnic identity development. Ethnic identity theory roots are found in social psychology's social identity theory as well as developmental psychology's identity theory. Ethnic identity refers to one's feelings of belonging or membership to a particular ethnic group who shares similar attitudes and behaviors (Ahmed, Keating, & Tsai, 2011). Jean Phinney's model of ethnic identity development stems from Erikson's identity theory on psychosocial development (Phinney, 1989). There are three states of progression under Phinney's model of ethnic identity development which are "unexamined ethnic identity", "ethnic identity search", and "ethnic identity achievement". The first stage "unexamined ethnic identity" occurs before adolescence when children either do not recognize their ethnic identities or do not care to examine them. The second stage "ethnic identity search" takes place as children become adolescents and begin to question traditional perceptions of ethnicity perhaps due to experiences with discrimination. It is during this stage that adolescents begin to desire to learn about their ethnicity and cultures, which is familiar to Erikson's "identity versus role-confusion" stage. The final "ethnic identity achievement" stage takes place as adults are aware of their ethnic identities and feel a strong sense of self-worth. At this stage, ethnicity has become internalized where one holds a positive ethnic self-concept and understands where one's ethnic group fits within the larger social environment. This final stage echoes Erickson's "achieved identity" stage (Phinney, 1989). Besides ethnic identity development, this study examined participants' religious identities as they are religiously diverse from the mainstream campus community in the U.S. What is more,

participants do not recognize how diverse their religious identities are until they arrived in the U.S.

Religious identity development. Schaefer (2002) defines religion as a system of views and practices based on sacred beliefs which individuals and groups use to guide their everyday lives (Schaefer, 2002). Peek (2005) proposes that development of a religious identity occurs as religion emerges as an individual's or group's main source of identity. The three stages of religious identity development are (1) viewing religion as an ascribed identity; (2) deeming religion as a chosen identity; and (3) perceiving religion as a declared identity (Peek, 2005). Religious identity development assisted this study as Arab Muslim participants' religious identities differ from the mainstream student population at their university in the U.S. Taking into account that religious beliefs are viewed as a feature of cultural identity, the development of this study's participants' cultural identities was studied as well.

Cultural identity development. Stemming from the political science and sociology disciplines, Gilbert (2010) defines cultural identity in two ways. First, cultural identity refers to one's identity in terms of its cultural characteristics including linguistic backgrounds, religious beliefs, values, moral education, and socially developed customs or etiquette. Second, cultural identity pertains to one's membership to a particular cultural group whose members share the same culture (Gilbert, 2010). Cultural identity development connects to this study's participants who hold cultural identities which differ from the typical U.S. university population. Participants who never faced cultural diversity prior to arriving in the U.S. did not recognize their cultural identities until they experienced diversity on the U.S. campus. In addition to diversity in ethnicity, religion, and culture, participants of this study are considered to hold diverse racial identities from faculty and peers at their university in the U.S.

Racial identity development. Bonilla-Silva (2009) argues that race is a social container of group affiliation whose key feature is social organization. He further provides that race is not a category. Rather, race is a method which can exclude a group or individual to become the other. Bonilla-Silva adds that race is a social construct, while at the same time, it is a social reality. Thus, when race is constructed, it generates real outcomes for those individuals who are “racialized” in a race as “white” or “black” (Bonilla-Silva, 2009, p. 9). Bonilla-Silva (2006, p. 25) additionally provides that racism today may not be explicit, yet it continues to exist though it is inclined to be institutional by specific sects within the U.S. society. Thus, certain individuals or groups appear colorblind to racial diversity asserting racism no longer exists in the U.S. At the same time, they continue to practice concealed racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2001).

Hall, Freedle, and Cross, Jr. (1972) outline the four stages in the development of a Black racial identity consisting of a (1) pre-encounter stage, (2) encounter stage, (3) immersion/emersion stage, and (4) internalization stage. The first pre-encounter stage takes place when African Americans move away from their Black racial identities by finding self-worth in their merits rather than their race. The next encounter stage occurs when African Americans undergo discrimination or racism such as hearing a racial insult from a member of the White racial group (Hall, Freedle, & Cross, Jr. 1972). The following immersion/emersion stage emerges when African Americans demonstrate feelings of anger or resentment towards people from the White racial group causing African Americans to avoid contact with White people. At the same time, African Americans tend to highly value anything related to being Black, while devaluing anything related to being White. The final internalization stage arises when African Americans become more open-minded and less defensive of White people. It is at this stage that

African Americans are more receptive to interacting with White and other racial groups in efforts to help all oppressed people (Hall, Freedle, & Cross, Jr., 1972).

Howard (2006) describes how members of the White race experience a White racial identity development which consists of two stages- (1) contact stage and (2) disintegration stage. During the contact stage, White people make contact with a person or group from another race either in person or through television, movies, etc. Before this contact took place, White people did not recognize they possessed a White racial identity or recognize they hold privileges of being White (Howard, 2006). The next stage disintegration stage occurs when White people recognize their White racial identities and begin to question why they were raised to develop certain negative perceptions about diverse races. Thus, White people at this stage start to recognize and question racial inequality and injustices (Howard, 2006). Both racial identity development theories assist this study in the same way cultural, ethnic, and religious identity development theories aided me as participants do not recognize their racial identities until they moved to the U.S. and experienced diversity or discrimination. An exploration of the second strand of this study's theoretical framework which is identity development theory is complete. Next, I will present the final branch of this study's framework, critical race theory, which focuses on how race relates to students' educational experiences. As this study's participants qualify as racially diverse from the conventional higher education population in the U.S., I applied critical race theory, whose origins are found in law and used today in education, to examine their collegiate experiences.

Critical Race Theory

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) recommend applying critical race theory, which emerged in legal studies where minority researchers were marginalized, to education today. The scholars studied how social structures and cultural influences shape education of racial minority students

and create educational inequities. They regard racism as beliefs that are culturally permitted that protect the privileges of white groups which exist due to the inferior status of racial minorities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to critical race theory, social reality is constructed through the creation of stories, which act as interpretive structures used to organize an individual's experiences. Furthermore, critical race theory maintains that minority groups denounce stereotyped depictions made about them by certain sects of society. Moreover, as minority groups begin to share stories about their experiences with inequity, they begin to critically analyze why they are oppressed (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Applying critical race theory to this study enabled me to provide authentic voices to express the educational realities and experiences of minority Arab Muslim international students who are considered as racial minorities as well as linguistic, ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities.

The theoretical framework for this study has been presented. The significance of this study is offered below.

Significance of Study

This study examined how Arab Muslim international students experience and describe their experiences with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty in higher education classrooms in the U.S. In addition, this study explored the unique experiences in which Arab Muslim international students face in the U.S. due to cultural, social, linguistic, religious, and academic differences. The narrative inquiry design of this study enabled me to describe the lived experiences of culturally diverse international students through their authentic voices, which is needed as significant literature is modest regarding the Arab Muslim international student population in the U.S. The narrative inquiry feature of this study further enabled a culturally and linguistically diverse group in the U.S. to represent themselves by sharing their voices that reflect

not only their lived experiences, but their diverse cultural and religious perspectives as well. My personal experiences as an American Muslim convert who entered into a doctoral degree program at a U.S. higher education institution helped me develop an interest in how Arab Muslim international students describe their lived collegiate experiences in the U.S.

Based on the data of narrative journals and follow-up interviews, this study gained insight into participants' descriptions of the U.S. university as welcoming to diversity; a struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices while in the U.S.; challenges with academic development including completion of assignments and oral class discussions in English; and positive perceptions of the U.S. higher education pedagogical and curricular approaches and practices. Conclusions drawn from Arab Muslim international students' descriptions of their lived experiences and researchers' examination of the study's data can enable U.S. higher education institutions, faculty, and researchers to acknowledge and address the unique issues and challenges English as a second language users in higher education face as well as enhance their understanding of Muslim students' beliefs and practices in order to better serve their needs. As such, this study's conclusions facilitate the building of a cultural bridge between the Arab Muslim world and the U.S. through honest assessment of the experiences of Arab Muslim students who have lived both in the U.S. and in the Arab region. A look at the problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, and significance of this study is complete. An overview of the design and methods applied to this research is presented next.

Design and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design and methods of narrative inquiry to examine the lived experiences of Arab Muslim international students who attend a U.S. higher education institution. Patton (2002) defines qualitative research as follows. "Qualitative methods

facilitate study of issues in depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry” (p. 14). Patton further (2002) explains that qualitative research “...takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (p. 39). Turning to narrative inquiry, Clandinin et al., (2006) describe narrative inquiry as “stories of experiences” of participants as well as descriptions and reflections of meanings of those experiences. Since the goal of this study was to understand participants’ descriptions of their experiences with the phenomena of attending a U.S. higher education institution, qualitative research approaches including the use of narratives and interviews were appropriate. Data collection included collecting narrative journals and follow-up interviews transcripts.

Participants and Sampling Strategies

This study involved eight Arab Muslim international students who attend a U.S. higher education institution as they were likely candidates to have experiences in relation to descriptions of U.S. higher education as well as their experiences with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty in higher education classroom in the U.S. In contrast to the large sample sizes of quantitative research studies, under qualitative research, the sample size is generally small and may consist of only one participant. The rationale behind selecting small sample sizes for qualitative research is that qualitative researchers prefer depth or rich, thick description of phenomena over breadth or a large sample of participants (Gall et al., 2007). Rich, thick description is a detailed description of the participants and setting of a study which enables readers to transfer information to other situations or surroundings (Creswell, 2007). Essentially, qualitative researchers gather data until the information from the data obtained becomes redundant or no new information is obtained (Gall et al., 2007). Concerning the relationship with

research participants, I was able to develop a relationship where I provided respect to participants' perspectives, experiences, and feelings, while remaining careful not to violate their human rights or privacy. In exchange, I feel that I was able to gain their trust in me as a researcher.

The study employed purposeful sampling as used in most qualitative research as I needed to select participants and sites that can “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon on the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). More specifically, I used a collaboration of snowball and criterion sampling methods for this narrative study. Patton (2002, p. 243) explains that the purpose of snowball sampling method is to, “Identify cases of interest from sampling people who know people who know people who know what cases are information rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview participants”. Criterion sampling refers to selecting all cases that meet some form of criteria (Patton, 2002, p. 243). Procedures for finding and recurring participants for this study included the following.

- First, I used a snowball sampling technique to help me find information of how to contact the Arab Muslim international student community by contacting the International Student Affairs Office (ISAO); Language Center, and the Muslim Student Association (MSA) at Rolling Meadows University (pseudonym).
- Second, I sent a call to participate in a research study letter (Appendix A) to the Arab Muslim international student community. More specifically, the ISAO and MSA forwarded this letter to all Arab Muslim international students.
- Third, I employed a criterion sampling technique to screen potential participants for this study (Appendix B), which narrowed down the pool of participants to eight consisting of four males and four females.

- Fourth, once participants were selected, I distributed consent forms to them to sign (Appendix C).

Procedures for this study followed qualitative purposeful sampling techniques as well as conformed to Human Subjects Protection of Institutional Review Board's regulation for research. In addition, participants selected for this study represent a range of disciplines, gender, and years of study among the sixteen Rolling Meadow (pseudonym) student respondents for this study. Participant selection began when I sent a call to participate in a study letter (Appendix A) to the Arab Muslim international student community via the International Students Affairs Office (ISAO), Language Center, and Muslim Student Association (MSA). Once the call to participate in a study letter was sent, sixteen students responded. At this point I asked respondents to complete a demographic sample survey (Appendix B), which allowed me to narrow the participants as well as obtain the greatest stratification of backgrounds, disciplines, and experiences to examine for this study.

After collecting the demographic sample surveys, I asked each of the sixteen respondents to undergo a screening process where I examined whether they matched this study's participant criteria as well as assessed their level of English proficiency by asking them to answer one written narrative question and one oral interview question. Next, I evaluated and narrowed the population to eight participants. Participants were stratified according to gender, nationality, disciplines of study, degrees pursued, and years of study at their institution of study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involved collecting participants' narrative journals and conducting follow-up interviews. Data collection procedures for this study lasted for four months and consisted of first, meeting with each participant individually to explain the purpose of this study. This initial

meeting also entailed explaining the procedures they would perform (i.e. write in narrative journals and respond to follow-up interview questions). Next, at this initial meeting, I asked participants to complete a demographic survey (Appendix B), which included one sample open-ended test question to determine their level of English proficiency. At the end of our meeting, I asked participants to review and sign consent forms (Appendix C) in which I also answered any questions they had regarding the study.

Second, I asked participants to write narratives in their individual journals to self-reflect and describe the meanings as they experienced the phenomenon of attending a U.S. higher education institution. Third, after reviewing all participants' narratives, one or two 60 minute follow-up face to face or telephone interviews were conducted with each participant in efforts to expand their narrative responses regarding their lived collegiate experiences. The face to face interviews were conducted at Rolling Meadows University (pseudonym). Fourth, I asked participants to review and offer feedback on all narrative journal and follow-up interview transcripts to ensure that I accurately and truthfully represented participants' words which reflected descriptions of their experiences to avoid possible misinterpretations of meanings of participants' experiences analyzed. It should be noted that all participants are English proficient as determined through a preliminary demographic survey (Appendix B) that included a sample test open-ended question. Thus, all participants were able to communicate both in oral and written forms entirely in English. As such, this study did not seek the services of an Arabic-English translator.

All research methods are suitable for narrative inquiry as they examine participants' experiences by looking at their descriptions of those experiences. Descriptions and reflections are important characteristics of narrative inquiry as participants reflect upon the phenomena that they experience so that they can better understand the social world and reality around them and

their place in that social world (Patton, 2002). Creswell (2007) explains that narrative researchers collect data about participants through a collection of participants' stories. This study analyzed the experiences of Arab Muslim international students through their individual stories connected to descriptions of U.S. higher education as well as their experiences with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty in higher education classroom in the U.S. A look at this study's validity and reliability measures employed is as follows.

Delimitations, Validity as Rigor, and Reliability as Trustworthiness

Validity as Rigor

Creswell (2007, pp. 206-207) defines validity in qualitative research as, "an attempt to assess the 'accuracy' of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants". As such, the researcher as author holds a responsibility to accurately represent participants' responses in a study through rigor and order. Strategies implemented for this study that enhanced rigor and accuracy of participants' responses are as follows.

- First, I provided a rich, thick, or detailed description of the data collected in order to provide a clear picture of the participants and setting of a study which enables readers to transfer information to other situations or surroundings (Creswell, 2007).
- Second, I validated data and conclusions by participants in order to prevent researcher bias, which refers to the subjectivity of the researcher (i.e. bias where the selection of the data either matches her assumptions or existing theories or where the selection of the data "stands out" to be noticed). Considering that a characteristic of qualitative research is to include the researcher's assumptions, existing theories, personal experiences, beliefs, and worldviews, it is virtually impossible as well as unwarranted to remove all forms of subjectivity on the part of the researcher. What is important,

however, is for the researcher to be aware of how her subjectivity could possibly influence the processes and conclusions of the study (Maxwell, 2005). Regarding potential researcher bias for this study, I hold a similar cultural background as participants of this study (i.e. Muslim higher education students). As such, special care was made to ensure that I did not demonstrate any form of favoritism or empathy towards any participant's issues, challenges, experiences, or responses. In efforts to prevent any preferences or subjectivity on my part, I selected participants whom I have never met prior to conducting the research study. Finally, I systematically asked for feedback on all data and conclusions from participants to avoid possible misinterpretations of the meanings and perspectives of participants' experiences analyzed (Maxwell, 2005).

- Third, reactivity refers to the researcher's influence over the setting or participants studied. Maxwell (2005) asserts how under a qualitative research approach, the aim is not to keep the influence of the researcher out of the research process. Rather, Maxwell (2005) recommends that qualitative researchers understand the influence they hold over the setting and participants and how to productively utilize it. More specifically, the researcher must understand how her influence could impact the validity of conclusions drawn from data within the study (Maxwell, 2005). I made every effort to continuously recognize how my own influences, privileges, and potential power over the research setting and participants throughout my research process may influence this study. In addition, I asked participants to actively participate in the research process by reading, correcting, and verifying all narratives and follow up interviews transcripts to ensure that my influence did not overpower

participants' true responses regarding their descriptions of collegiate experiences, I can only assume that their agreement to the accuracy, transparency, and honesty of this study's findings is a true agreement.

- Fourth, reflexivity refers to how the researcher, "...acknowledges the impact of the writing on the researcher, on the participants, and on the reader" (Creswell, 2007, p. 179). Maxwell (2005) defines reflexivity as, "...the fact that the researcher is part of the social world he or she studies" (p. 82). Maxwell (2005) further explains how with qualitative interviews, the interviewer may have influence over the interview responses. Maxwell offers that in order to eliminate the interviewers' influence over the interview, interview questions should not be leading (Maxwell, 2005). As such, I reviewed all interview questions for this study carefully to ensure no questions were leading. Regarding the research write up, Creswell (2007) suggests that researchers recognize how the write up will be perceived by participants. More specifically, researchers should keep in mind whether participants will feel marginalized, offended, or silenced by the researchers' writings. In addition, the write up can have an impact on the reader where he or she may hold different interpretations than the researcher intended (Creswell, 2007). In response to issues of reflexivity, I reviewed this study's findings and conclusions to ensure I did not include any words or tones that could possibly offend or marginalize participants. Although I reviewed all findings and conclusions of this study to ensure that all participants' true voices were heard so no statements or thoughts were omitted or silenced, it is possible that there were additional thoughts of participants that could have been explored further to share with this study's findings.

- Fifth, triangulation refers to collecting data from a variety of sources or conducting a mixture of research methods or theoretical perspectives in order to minimize the possibility of “chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 112). For this study, I was able to triangulate data collection by collecting diverse field texts (data sources), which consisted of (1) narrative journals and (2) follow-up interviews. In addition, this study followed triangulation procedures by applying interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives of research from the (1) education and (2) social science disciplines.

Reliability as Trustworthiness and Ethical Concerns

Reliability is a sensitive issue in qualitative research. In quantitative research, studies should be conducted so that others may replicate the researcher’s processes in order to form the same conclusions. However, in qualitative research, replication is impossible because the researcher’s experiences and assumptions play an active role in the research process. Thus, reliability is viewed in terms of trustworthiness in qualitative research. In order to enhance trustworthiness under qualitative approaches, other researchers should be able to understand the logic, assumptions, and interpretations of a study rather than replicate it. In efforts to increase trustworthiness in this study, I followed the guidelines stated below.

- First, I provided examinations that are concrete and grounded in the data collected.
- Second, I demonstrated that the processes I followed are clear and understandable by others. In other words, the design and methodology is transparent and grounded in a conceptual framework.
- Third, I collected and represented sufficient data from data sources as well as provided alternate explanations for data and conclusions (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

- Fourth, in efforts to increase reliability of data and conclusions, I conducted research in a systematic and rigorous manner by explaining clearly the purpose of this study and disclosed the decision-making processes that I made to gather, process, and analyze data including to form conclusions so that other researchers may follow the processes of this study in order to develop their own conclusions.
- Fifth, I triangulated the methods I used to collect data by collecting narrative journals as well as follow-up interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Summary. Efforts to reduce potential limitations of this study include first, I used appropriate sampling techniques for narrative inquiry (i.e. combined snowball and criterion sampling methods). Second, I collected data from participants until the information from the data obtained became redundant or no new information was obtained (Gall et al., 2007). Third, qualitative studies do not traditionally generalize findings to a general population. However, this study outlined all research methods in a clear manner so other researchers may follow my steps in order to conduct their own research for the same or similar study or population. This completes an introduction outlining this study's problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, and methods employed. A list of definition of terms is presented in Appendix G. Chapter two will present a review of the literature pertaining to Arab Muslim international students' lived experiences while attending higher education institutions in the U.S.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of Arab Muslim international students as they attend a higher education institution in the U.S. In this chapter, literature related to the experiences of Arab Muslim international students seeking higher education degrees in English-speaking countries was surveyed. Additional literature examined include social, cultural, pedagogical, and linguistic theories related to Arab Muslim international students' experiences in higher education as well as the contexts of internationalization of higher education and international students in English-speaking countries including the U.S. and Canada.

Literature sources reviewed including peer reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and books were selected from databases from the social sciences and education disciplines such as *JSTOR*, *EBSCOhost*, *Project Muse*, and *ERIC*. This chapter reviews literature associated with (1) curricular approaches and practices in higher education; (2) pedagogical approaches and practices in higher education; (3) faculty relationships and interactions with students; (4) the university and classroom culture and environment; and (5) language and linguistics in relation to the experiences of Arab Muslim international students. This chapter concludes with a synopsis of the literature reviewed as well as recognition of the gaps in literature relevant to Arab Muslim international students' higher education experiences in the U.S.

A review of the literature regarding the lived experience of Arab Muslim international students includes perspectives from both the U.S. and Canada. The reason for the inclusion of the collegiate experiences of Arab Muslim international students in Canada is twofold. First, rich

literature that focuses on Arab Muslim international students' lived experiences within U.S. higher education institutions is minimal. Second, since Canada is home to a Western, predominately Christian, and culturally diverse society which echoes the Western predominately Christian society of the U.S., it is fitting to include studies that are available concerning Arab Muslim international students lived experiences in Canadian higher education institutions. I will begin with a review of the literature pertaining to the higher education curriculum in the U.S. with a focus on the experiences of international students including Arab Muslims' that are related to the higher education curriculum.

Goals & Roles of American Education

According to Walker and Soltis (2004), curriculum "...refers not only to the official list of courses offered by the school—we call that the 'official curriculum'—but also to the purposes, content, activities, and organization of the educational program actually created in schools by teachers, students, and administrators" (p. 1). During the 1830s, Horace Mann developed the notion of the "common schools" (i.e. public schools today) which promoted the ideal that education is the "great equalizer" that would generate wealth and eradicate poverty and crime in America. Mann envisioned education as a remedy to social ills and inequality within society and a way to protect people's individual rights and freedoms. However, Mann's dream of social improvement as the outcome of education for all people never materialized (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 39). From the time of the establishment of public schools, the role of education was to prepare students to become future citizens who promote democratic ideals. In response to the influx of diverse immigrants to America, additional purposes of schools shifted to preserve traditional Anglo-Protestant values and culture (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 36).

Under the Progressive Education movement of education at the turn of twentieth century in the U.S., a number of educators such as John Dewey promoted a child and community-centered schooling. This view of education held that the primary purpose of school was to deliver knowledge to students so they may grow up to become active participants of democracy and social justice in society (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 85). In addition, Dewey and other progressive educators promoted a child and community-centered curriculum that connected students' experiences with new learning activities to make learning meaningful and relevant to students' lives outside of the classroom within a democratic society. Dewey and progressive reformers also called for the recognition of cultural pluralism within the curriculum. Progressive reformer Jane Adams, in collaboration with Dewey, strived to assist immigrants to adapt to the new culture in America, while maintaining their traditional cultures from their home countries (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 88).

Goals & Roles of Higher Education Curricula in the U.S.

Research has discussed the goals and roles of higher education curricula in the U.S. (Banta, 1966; Eckel & King, 2004; Kenniston, 1960; McGrath, 1949; Webler, 1997). Banta (1966) explains how original curricula goals of higher education in the U.S. consisted of learning; establishing standards for judging ideas and problems worth investigating; and to develop knowledge (p. 435). Banta further asserts that higher education is responsible for enhancing students' self-sufficiency in learning, conducting research, and solving problems (Banta, 1996). McGrath (1949) asserts that the goals of higher education is to (1) train individuals for employment or professions which demands education past high school; (2) offer educational services to society; (3) develop knowledge, research, and train students to become scholars; and (4) educate students to become democratic citizens (McGrath, 1949). Educating students to

become democratic citizens echoes Dewey's (1906) notion of child and community centered schooling. McGrath further promotes higher education's responsibility to develop students' competence in professions. McGrath additionally defines a university as a place where research and teaching takes place as well as the development of scholarship that can be a legacy for future generations (McGrath, 1906). Echoing McGrath, Keniston (1960) also views a major goal of higher education is to develop responsible citizens for society in the U.S. Keniston further asserts that higher education student and faculty performance must remain high as higher education is a privilege rather than a right for those students who demonstrate merit (Keniston, 1960). Today's curriculum no longer views education as a privilege, but as a right for all students to attend as an expression of equal educational opportunities (Eckel & King, 2004; Webler, 1997).

Webler (1997) describes how traditional higher education curricula goals in Germany include preparing students for employment as well as for life in general. Higher education originally was a tool used to meet society's needs. For this reason, higher education curricula aimed to satisfy not only students, but employers and society as well. The role of higher education curricula additionally was to develop students' academically as well as personally and socially. Employers expected higher education graduates to be highly qualified and skilled as well as be flexible enough to work under demanding conditions. Thus, higher education graduates were expected to improve society and develop the economy (Webler, 1997, p. 81).

During the twenty-first century in the U.S., economic and social developments altered the structure of higher education so that it was more accessible to middle class groups well as to women and ethnic or racial minorities. The new motto for America became "land of opportunity" for all individuals (Eckel & King, 2004, p. i). Key principles of higher education in the U.S. are equal opportunities coupled with social mobility. Based on these principles,

characteristics of higher education are diversity, independence, competitiveness, and inclusiveness. In addition, U.S. higher education is one of the largest in the world. The U.S. higher education system offers five types of degrees. These degrees consist of associate's degrees offered by two-year community colleges; bachelor's degrees consisting of both general education and major field of study courses offered by four-year universities; master's degrees with a theoretical and professional center also offered by four-year universities; professional degrees in advanced professional fields such as law or medicine; and doctoral degrees consisting of either doctor of philosophy (PhD) or doctor of education (EdD), which focuses on professional independent research (Eckel & King, 2004, p. 9).

Modern higher education curricula developed goals such as maintain loyalty to the institution and establish work ethics. In light of shifting demands of the labor market, higher education graduates must have a skills and knowledge base that adjusts as well (Webler, 1997). Thus, not only will the labor market have a sufficient supply of qualified employees, graduates will be in a better position to maintain employment when changes take place. Higher education curricula today have a further responsibility to enable students to gain new knowledge through research. More specific goals of higher education curricula include developing students' abilities to engage in holistic inquiry; develop problem-solving abilities; enhance creativity, concentration, and persistence; construct organization skills; increase motivation to learn; improve academic competencies; create critical analysis and thinking skills; create ability to work on a team; develop presentation skills; and improve students personal and social development (Webler, 1997). Studies related to goals and roles of higher education curricula in the U.S. highlight how today's students are encouraged to acquire abilities to work in the labor force and improve society. Challenges exist as well within higher education curricula in the U.S.

Challenges in Higher Education Curricula in U.S.

The challenges in higher education curricula in the U.S. have been analyzed by a number of studies (Lambert, Parker, & Neary, 2007; Nelson & Watt, 2004; Webler, 1997; Yuksel, 2010). Webler (1997) posts that there is a conflict between goals of higher education academic disciplines' curricula, which are to develop students' academic competencies and research skills and goals of society, which are to develop students' job-specific qualifications. Another difference of opinion exists regarding who should attend higher education. Traditionally, only the elite classes and government bureaucrats received a higher education, while today higher education institutions welcome all people (Webler, 1997). Yuksel (2010) describes the characteristics of today's higher education curriculum as, "...flexibility, inclusiveness, collaboration, authenticity, relevance, and extended institutional boundaries..." (p. 1). Yuksel identifies the goals of higher education as, "...expanded to incorporate lifelong learning, global interaction, the attainment of meta-cognitive knowledge and abilities..." (p. 1). Yuksel recommends integrating social constructivist learning activities with cognitive constructivist activities in efforts to create more personalized learning strategies including implementing "negotiated curricula" in the higher education classroom. A negotiated curriculum is a student-centered curriculum where students participate in the development of the curriculum including the objectives of the unit of study; learning expectations; teaching and learning styles; learning activities; instructional materials; and assessment strategies (Yuksel, 2010). Yuksel proposes that negotiated curricula motivate students to learn, while developing their knowledge. As students plan and evaluate their own individual learning by making their own decisions, they begin to recognize their own abilities while developing a sense of ownership and self-reliance. The result

is an increase in students' motivation to learn leading to improved academic performance (McMahon, 2010; Yuksel, 2010).

Lambert, et al. (2007) provides that higher education curricula in the United Kingdom (UK) have established a connection between academics and economics in efforts to create a “knowledge economy”. Kirk (2010) defines the knowledge economy as, “...the production of ideas, systems and educated citizens, who are able to be traded in a globalized economic system” (p. 3). With the background of the global market, higher education institutions in the UK have developed a more managerial approach to education with quality control and accountability measures; focus on tuitions payments from students; and creating a connection between the higher education institution and private industry (Kirk, 2010; Lambert, Parker, & Neary, 2007; Nelson & Watt, 2004). The result is that higher education has become “increasingly commercialized and commoditized...” (Lambert, et. al., 2007, p. 525). Lambert, et al. adds that universities has not only become more privatized, but has become divided in their mission to either teach or conduct research for private industries. “Here, a hierarchal divide has appeared, locating research as a more prestigious and more financially viable activity than teaching” (Lambert, et al., 2007, p. 527).

Kirk (2010) illustrates, “The movement of educational systems and practice, along with those who work and study in schools and universities, is driven by a globalized education sector that, in turn, places education in the realm of a commodity, something to be sold, purchased, exchanged and valued or devalued” (p. 3). In light of this atmosphere, Lambert, et al. (2007) calls for reforming the higher education curriculum to incorporate the concepts of critical pedagogy. As such, they recommend for higher education curricula to implement learning strategies that teach undergraduate students course contents as well as how to conduct research.

Accordingly, research and teaching need to be synthesized within the curriculum (Lambert, et al., 2007). Based on the above studies, higher education curricula in the U.S. are able to provide a variety of disciplines including science and technology due to the availability of advanced technology. Issues related to curriculum marginalization of diverse students within the U.S. educational system are examined next.

Curriculum marginalization of diverse students. Curriculum marginalization of diverse students is manifested in the forms of ethnocentrism, hegemony, the hidden curriculum, and omission of information from curriculum. Manning and Baruth (2009) define cultural ethnocentrism as when one believes his or her culture is superior to others. Thus, some may use their ethnocentric beliefs as a way to judge or evaluate others' behavior or work. Ethnocentric beliefs and attitudes can pose as an obstruction to accepting and respecting cultural diversity within our schools and society. This is because European American cultural backgrounds and experiences may be perceived as the norm or standard in which other cultural groups should follow. According to Manning and Baruth (2009), "ethnocentrism is a universal characteristic in which one's culture is viewed as natural, correct, and superior while other's culture is perceived as odd or inferior" (p. 45). In addition, sociologists Anderson and Taylor (2006) define ethnocentrism as, "the habit of seeing things only from the point of view from one's own group" (p. 67).

Focusing more on ethnocentrism and education, Banks and Banks (2010, p. 445) define an ethnocentric curriculum as, "A curriculum in which concepts, events, and situations are perceived primarily from the perspectives of European nations and cultures and in which Western civilization is emphasized." Derman-Sparks (1995) describes how many of today's schools maintain a curriculum that focuses on the mainstream culture where classroom signs,

learning materials, and textbooks show the perspectives, experiences, and histories of the typical cultural group in the U.S. Derman-Sparks further offers that as the mainstream culture's beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and values are represented throughout the curriculum, there is little or no recognition of diverse cultural groups. Thus, the mainstream culture is perceived as the norm, while diverse cultures are assumed to be abnormal. Cultural ethnocentrism focuses on the mainstream culture while excluding minority cultures in a similar manner as cultural hegemony, which is discussed next.

Anderson and Taylor (2006) define cultural hegemony as, “the pervasive and excessive influence of one culture throughout society” (p. 73). The sociologists attest that an outcome of cultural hegemony is the creation of a “homogeneous mass culture” (p. 73). Banks and Banks (2010) refers to cultural hegemony as, “an established view of things—a commonsense view of what is and why things happen that serves the interests of those people already privileged in a society” (p. 46). The dangers of both ethnocentrism and cultural hegemony in education is that those students who are not from the mainstream European or Western culture may feel marginalized and/or alienated from learning. This could impact their motivation to learn, self-esteem, academic efficacy, academic performance, and willingness to continue school (Manning & Baruth, 2009, Banks & Banks, 2010, and Oaks & Lipton, 2007). Resembling both cultural hegemony and the ethnocentric curriculum is the “the hidden curriculum” as outlined below.

Manning and Baruth (2009) describe how the hidden curriculum may not represent minority or culturally diverse groups honestly or adequately in textbooks and other curricular materials. In spite of its subtle appearance, the hidden curriculum impacts the lives of students from diverse cultures and races. Included in the hidden curriculum are teachers' expectations of culturally diverse students and how they treat them; exclusive portrayal of white middle class people in

textbooks; and disproportionate tracking practices of minority students into lower ability or vocational courses. Also included in the hidden curriculum are “educators’ and other students’ degrees of acceptance and attitudes towards learners from different cultural backgrounds; and the degree of acceptance of language differences” (Manning & Baruth, 2009, p. 194). Since such attitudes may be either conscious or unconscious, it is imperative that teachers or faculty self-reflect upon how their cultural backgrounds could influence how they perceive students from diverse cultures. In addition to the hidden curriculum, curricular materials may omit certain cultural groups leaving them underrepresented or completely unrepresented in textbooks.

Manning and Baruth assert, “The invisibility of a group implies that it has less value or significance in U.S. society than others” (p. 196). Thus, some cultural groups’ existence or realities may be completely ignored or omitted from the curriculum. Manning and Baruth additionally explain how curricular materials may distort the experiences of specific cultural groups by providing inaccurate, stereotyped, or unbalanced negative portrayals. As such, they exclusively portray the negative events of diverse cultural groups or they present one perspective of experiences that, although accurate according to that perspective, may be overall misleading to others. An outline of the marginalization of diverse students from curricula in the U.S. has been offered. A critical multicultural curriculum strives to address marginalization issues of diverse students through social justice measures.

Critical multicultural curriculum. A critical multicultural curriculum, “...helps students know and value the diverse traditions that enrich and dignify the nation’s heritage, and it engages students in learning and maintaining their own heritage and language” (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 95). One feature of a critical multicultural curriculum is that it is inclusive as it includes the experiences, traditions, perspectives, and languages of immigrant and culturally diverse students.

Another trait of a critical multicultural curriculum is it includes “cultural capital”. Cultural capital is described by sociologists as being, “used to justify and legitimize the uneven distribution of wealth and power among racial and social groups” (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 98). One form of cultural capital is students’ language such as Standard English, which is most often spoken by white, native English speakers. Many educators perceive having cultural capital as a means of having access to wealth and power in America. According to Ladson-Billings (1994, p. 82), the “codes of power” include the power of knowledge of how to use Standard English in school and society. The goal of teachers should be to teach students how and when to use Standard English in order to obtain success in America, while at the same time letting students understand that their native languages or home dialects are valued as well.

An additional feature of a critical multicultural curriculum is that it holds socio-cultural perspectives on curriculum and learning. Critical multiculturalism advocates a curriculum whose content includes the perspectives, languages, experiences, and cultural knowledge of culturally diverse groups. By doing so, it does not, however, reject or disrespect the cultural knowledge of the mainstream culture, which is the source of the content of the traditional curriculum. Rather, a critical multicultural curriculum “...engages students in social critique and encourages action that grows out of their critical learning” (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 103). Oakes and Lipton (2007) explain how a multicultural curriculum that holds socio-cultural perspectives on learning resembles the child and community-centered curriculum of John Dewey in that they view knowledge as constructed; knowledge should be meaningful to students within the context of learning; and new knowledge should be connected to students’ lived experiences and cultural knowledge.

Nieto similarly calls for a critical curriculum that enables students to recognize systematic discrimination that minorities and people of color continue to endure. Thus, students not only learn about social injustices such as oppression within society, but they also learn how to become liberated from those injustices by critically reflecting upon their lives in relation to their place within society (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 100). Hence, critical multiculturalists call for “praxis”(or action) that refers to a curriculum that develops students’ knowledge and skills needed to recognize and oppose racism, discrimination, oppression, and other social injustices (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 101). A survey of goals and role of education in the U.S. including how culture relates to k-12 curriculum has been made. At this time, a view of higher education curricula in relation to international students in the U.S. is presented.

U.S. Higher Education Curricula and Arab Muslim International Students

Studies have explored international students’ access to higher education curricula in the U.S. and Canada (Abukhatta, 2004; Cadman, 2000; Mostafa, 2006; Rocha-Tracy, 2009; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Rocha-Tracy (2009) found that one challenge to immigrant students obtaining quality educational opportunities in American universities is the hidden curriculum where the standard curriculum may be culturally biased by assuming that all students have the same background knowledge and cultural experiences while excluding those students who are outside the American cultural norm. The result were feeling by immigrant students of exclusion; discomfort in the classroom; and a sense of devalue of their cultural identities (Rocha-Tracy, 2009). Similarly, Manning & Baruth (2009) offer that the hidden curriculum may exclude minority or culturally diverse groups in addition to dishonestly or inadequately represent them in textbooks and other curricular materials. In spite of its subtle appearance, the hidden curriculum impacts the lives of students from diverse cultures and races. The hidden curriculum further

includes teachers' expectations, which are based on their attitudes or beliefs towards diverse groups, of culturally diverse students as well as how teachers interact with students (Manning & Baruth, 2009, p. 194). Research additionally reveals how difference in educational systems; academic environment; learning styles; teaching methods; interaction with professors or peers; and learning in a second language can make learning challenging for international students (Abukhatta, 2004; Cadman, 2000; Mostafa, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

Research has examined how Arab Muslim international students access higher education curricula in the U.S. (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Meleis, 1982; Story, 1982). Alazzi and Chiodo (2006) conducted a study of eight Jordanian graduate international students and found the ultimate goal of participants is academic achievement. Although participants perceived problems with obtaining academic success; at the same time, they felt competent in succeeding in their graduate studies. Describing differences between education systems in America and in Jordan, Alazzi and Chiodo's (2006) study found that the differences caused anxiety to Jordanian students they fear of failing and bringing shame to their families back home.

Arab international students also experience academic difficulties in the U.S. due to curricular differences including the structure of curricula between the Middle East and U.S. They further express how they are not familiar with choosing and attending elective courses in the U.S., which has a negative impact on their academic performance (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006). This is because in the Middle East, the curriculum is structured so students do not have options to choose which courses they wish to enroll (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Meleis, 1982). Thus, Arab students are accustomed to relying on qualified educators to make course selections on their behalf (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Story, 1982). The above research demonstrates how Arab Muslim international students undergo the same or similar experiences in regards to accessing

the U.S. higher education curriculum as international students from other cultural backgrounds. Studies surveyed above examine collegiate experiences of Arab Muslim international students in relation to diversity in language, culture, and academic systems in the U.S. or Canada. A look at higher education pedagogical approaches and practices is provided below.

Higher Education Pedagogical Approaches and Practices

Pedagogy of Higher Education in U.S.: Trends and Issues

Researchers have studied trends and issues concerning pedagogy of higher education in the U.S. (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012; Feliz, 2005; Houghton, 2004; Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010; Mustafa & Chiang, 2006; Weber, 1997; Yuksel, 2010). Higher education seeks to prepare students for life's challenges as well as train them for employment. Weber (1997) asserts that the major qualifications for employment can not be acquired through the traditional lecture method found in higher education pedagogical classroom practices. Rather, active learning is needed in order for students to effectively learn. Weber further argues that subject content must be integrated with practical knowledge in order for students to acquire the qualifications needed to compete in today's labor market. Weber stresses how content knowledge must be incorporated with problem solving techniques in order for graduates to survive in today's labor market (Weber, 1997).

Consequently, instructional practices need to be relevant to current job market demands. Weber (1997) additionally suggests that content examinations be expanded to assess cognitive knowledge as well as the processes followed by students to obtain the products of knowledge attainment. For instance, in addition to implementing traditional examinations that assess products such as tests or essays, instructors should evaluate processes through classroom discussions, collaborative group projects, or oral class presentations (Weber, 1997). Further

characteristics of today's higher education pedagogy include maintaining quality assurance controls; providing high quality education with a decreasing budget; and satisfying the needs of a changing student population (Mustafa & Chiang, 2006).

Yuksel (2010) offers an added feature of higher education pedagogical design is that instructors include subject content into curricula, which may not be motivational or relevant to students' lives. Thus, instructors search for pedagogical strategies which engage student learning. Instructors also strive to use appropriate assessment tools that effectively evaluate students' true learning. However, higher education students argue that classroom assessments do not accurately measure exactly what knowledge students hold or the processes they take to gain that knowledge via study time and effort. Finally, research finds that there is a wide diversity in students' capabilities and learning styles within higher education classrooms which can be addressed in pedagogical practices via negotiated curricula (Feliz, 2005; Houghton, 2004; Yuksel, 2010). International students such as Arab Muslims possess diverse learning needs and styles as well in which negotiated curricula can be applied. Scholars also demonstrate how additional teaching strategies which can improve learning outcomes for international students whose second language is English include handouts on lecture notes, online discussions, course materials posted on the course website, and cooperative learning (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012; Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010).

Pedagogy of multicultural education. Robertson, Fluck, and Webb (2003) define pedagogy as teaching towards learning which includes learning activities and negotiation of learning experiences.

Nieto's (1996) describes how pedagogical practices of multicultural education "...challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and

affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers represent” (p. 307). Oakes and Lipton (2007, p. 100) depict multicultural pedagogy as, “For the teacher, critical pedagogy means that the classroom procedures and relationships as well as subject matter content are continually subjected to questions designed to reveal bias, favoritism, or single perspectives (usually, not always, those of the dominate culture)”. In addition to multicultural education, critical pedagogy addresses issues related to social justice and equity of minority students such as those who are culturally or linguistically diverse.

Critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy emerged out of the neo-Marxian critical theory of the “Frankfurt School” and was developed by educator and social activist Paulo Freire.

Freire’s(1970) critical pedagogy criticizes educational injustices and inequities found in capitalist societies by calling for the emancipation of education of marginalized groups. Freire proposes for teachers and students together engage in a “*cultural synthesis*” to reaffirm minority groups’ cultures by critically analyze and reflect upon their realities and histories in order to create new knowledge and realities. Cultural synthesis, “resolve[s] the contradiction between the worldview of the leaders and that of the people, to the enrichment of both” (Freire, 1970, p. 181).

Multicultural educational approaches as discussed by Oakes and Lipton (2007) and Manning and Baruth (2009) share Friere’s vision of instilling social justice and equity in teaching practices that help culturally diverse students such as Arab international students in their K-12 and higher education classrooms to obtain academic achievement. An outline of research related to pedagogy of higher education and international students in the U.S. is next.

Pedagogy of Higher Education and Arab Muslim International Students

The pedagogy of higher education in relation to international students in the U.S. and Canada has been highlighted by a number of studies (Abukhatta, 2004; Cadman, 2000; Mostafa, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Rocha-Tracy, 2009; Wisker, 2005). Researchers stress how it is important for faculty to understand that international students construct knowledge and conduct research according to their cultural backgrounds and beliefs (Mostafa, 2006; Wisker, 2005). In addition, the differences in educational systems; academic environment; learning styles; teaching methods; and learning in a second language can make learning challenging for international students (Abukhatta, 2004; Cadman, 2000; Mostafa, 2006). According to international students' research responses, further differences between the higher education systems and pedagogy approaches in the U.S. and Canada and their home countries include knowledge in U.S. and Canadian universities is considered rational and objective; class discussion and participation is respected as a learning strategy in U.S. and Canadian universities; student-teacher relationship in the U.S. and Canada is informal; there is a wide array of university facilities in the U.S. and Canada; the U.S. and Canada holds advanced technology; and in the U.S. and Canada there is an emphasis on independent learning (Mostafa, 2006). A review of studies connected to how international students interpret differences between the pedagogical approaches and practices in the U.S. and Canada as compared to their home countries has been made. A look at research that focuses on how Arab Muslim international students interpret differences between the pedagogical approaches and practices in the U.S. and Canada as compared to in their home countries is next.

Research has outlined the differences in educational systems in the U.S. and Middle East (Abukhattala, 2004, Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012; Ladd and Ruby, Jr., 1999; Mostafa, 2006; Shana'a, 1979). The above researchers provide how pedagogical

approaches in the Middle East differ from those in the U.S. To begin with, in the Middle East, the teacher is regarded as holding absolute authority. In the Middle East, teachers and professors lecture to students or read directly from textbooks. According to a study conducted by Derderian-Aghajanian and Cong (2012), assessment in the Middle East involves only examinations that measure how many facts students memorized rather than how to apply learning concepts leading to students only learn what is directly connected to the textbooks or curriculum. What is more, in the Middle East, students learn individually, rather than with partners or teams. The result of these educational differences is Middle Eastern students face challenges with problem-solving and communication when they attend U.S. classrooms (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012).

Likewise, a study of ten Arab Muslim international students in Canada by Abukhattala (2004) found participants described their home countries' educational system and instructional practices as focusing mainly on rote memorization of facts. However, the participants spoke positively of Canadian pedagogical practices, which place the student at the center of the learning process. In addition, participants explain how teaching methods in Canada promote the development of critical thinking and decision making skills. The most favorable teaching styles in Canada that Middle Eastern participants cited were classroom discussions are based on democratic ideals where students are allowed to criticize the instructor and participate in cooperative learning methods (Abukhattala, 2004, p. 73). On a similar note, a study of six Arab Muslim graduate international students in a university in Canada conducted by Mostafa (2006) found learning at a Canadian university was more productive than in universities in participants' home countries. Mostafa further discovered that learning at the university in Canada was more practical and faculty promoted independent critical thinking and creativity from their students. In

Arab Muslim students' home countries, respondents expressed they were restricted to rote memorization of facts. What is more, at the university in Canada, they were given the opportunity to participate in class discussions; participate in conference presentations; and publish articles in professional journals, which they never experienced in their home countries in the Middle East (Mostafa, 2006, p. 46).

Alazzi & Chiodo (2006) further identified how Arab international students are use to respecting authority figures such as professors. As such, they do not feel comfortable defending their positions, asking questions, or challenging professors in classrooms in the U.S. or Canada (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Shana'a, 1979). Yet at the same time, Alazzi and Chiodo (2006) discovered how Arab students perceived they were competent at conducting problem-solving strategies in class by thoughtfully analyzing problems in order to derive solutions. Similarly, Ladd and Ruby, Jr. (1999) identified how international students prefer to learn by solving problems rather than via lecture method. Arab students also felt anxious about performing well academically as well as the amount of time required for their studies leaving little time for recreational activities (Allazi & Chiodo, 2006). The above studies examined higher education pedagogical approaches and practices in the U.S. and Canada in reference to Arab Muslim international students. The next section will study research pertaining to faculty interactions with international students in the U.S.

Faculty Interactions with Students

Faculty Interactions with Arab Muslim International Students

The interactions between faculty in the U.S. and international students have been investigated by a number of researchers (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Dyer, 1998; Epstein, Boden, & Kenway, 2005; Ladd & Ruby, Jr., 1999; Lambert, Parker, & Neary, 2007; Maheshwari & Mafroy, 2001;

Mostafa, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Rai, 2002). Adhering to the principles of critical pedagogy, Lambert, et al. (2007) encourage higher education faculty and students to engage in “praxis” or self-reflection coupled with action throughout the learning process, while collaborating together to conduct research. As such, both faculty and students can engage in learning and research together (Lambert, et al., 2007). Differences in academic cultures place strains on faculty-student relationships. For instance, differences in educational systems, language, and culture may demand more effort and time by the faculty supervisor or faculty member. Additionally, as mentioned in the previous section, many cultures require students to respect authority figures such as faculty supervisors or faculty members by not questioning their advice. International students are also not accustomed to the informality of the faculty supervisor-student or faulty-student relationships (Maheshwari & Mafroy, 2001; Mostafa, 2006). International students may additionally maintain higher than normal expectations of the outcomes of a doctoral program; differences in research education and training than in U.S.; and reluctance to engage in theoretical discussions or debates with faculty members or faculty supervisors (Epstein, Boden, & Kenway, 2005; Mostafa, 2006).

Research has likewise been conducted regarding adjustment issues and learning styles of international students. Ladd and Ruby, Jr. (1999) suggest that faculty members should try to facilitate international students to adapt to the U.S. education culture rather than encourage them to assimilate. Ladd and Ruby, Jr. (1999) define assimilation as, “the process by which minorities lose their distinct characteristics and become indistinguishable from the dominant groups” (p. 365). They define acculturation as, “the process of adapting to the dominant culture but at the same time maintaining a separate cultural identity” in which they recommend (Ladd & Ruby, Jr., 1999, p. 365). The scholars discovered that international students desire to develop warm and

personal relationships with their instructors (Ladd & Ruby, Jr., 1999). In addition, research further demonstrates how culturally diverse and international students' educational performance is improved through positive interactions with faculty members (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). More specifically, faculty advisors can assist international students to overcome educational challenges as well as meet their educational needs. Faculty can additionally help international students adjust to the new educational environment by becoming culturally aware of diverse cultures as well as include diverse cultures in lectures and course instructional materials (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Rai, 2002). Research conducted by Dyer (1998) about U.S. or Western faculty teaching in a Japanese foreign university suggests that faculty follow Freire's critical pedagogical approaches when instructing culturally diverse students.

Scholars have similarly examined students' perceptions of their teachers' interactions with them in the form of expectations, care, and supportiveness in students' academic abilities (Freire, 1970, Gay, 2002, Madhere, 1998, Smith-Maddox, 1998). Smith-Maddox (1998) found that as teacher expectations of students decrease, students' self-confidence and academic efficacy decreases as well. Thus, she suggests that an increase in teacher expectations can increase students' self-esteem and academic achievement (Smith-Maddox, 1998). This concludes an examination of U.S. faculty interactions with international students. At this time, I will evaluate U.S. faculty interactions with Arab Muslim international students in particular.

Arab Muslim international students' academic relationships with faculty in the U.S. were reviewed by a number of studies (Abukhattala, 2004; Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Mostafa, 2006; Sonleitner, & Khelifa, 2005). Research reveals how international students experience communication challenges and cultural differences while communicating with faculty

(Collinridge, 1999). According to Collingridge (1999), although international students such as Arab Muslims attempt to integrate within the university culture and community, cultural differences contribute to uneasy interactions between faculty and international students. Communication challenges between faculty and international students stem from faculty's lack of awareness of students' English language barriers. Faculty should additionally be aware that international students including Arab Muslims may feel uncomfortable participating in class discussions due to cultural differences. For instance, some cultures find it disrespectful for students to question professors or teachers. Thus, professors should recognize these cultural differences when preparing grades for class participation. Furthermore, international students may not be aware of the proper manner to address professors such as Mr., Dr., or Professor. Professors should explain on the first day of class how they wish students to address them (Collinridge, 1999; Myles & Cheng, 2003).

Myles and Cheng (2003) discovered that graduate international students describe they felt comfortable and welcome communicating with their faculty advisors or faculty in the U.S. However, students from Myles and Cheng's study did convey that faculty needs to be more culturally sensitive and culturally aware of students' backgrounds. Research further recommends that faculty recognize cultural differences between their own cultures and that of their students in order to avoid judging students by faculty's cultural values and beliefs thereby leading to cultural misunderstandings (Bennett, 1993; Myles & Cheng, 2003). Alazzi and Chiodo (2006) found that a number of Jordanian international student participants felt helpless when interacting with faculty. As American faculty require graduate students to demonstrate responsibility over their education, Arab students felt hesitant to ask for assistance or guidance from faculty members or faculty advisors. Arab students furthermore perceived their entire academic careers depend

significantly upon faculty. In addition, some participants described feeling there was no one to go to when they experienced a problem at the university resulting sometimes in changing departments in efforts to resolve the problem (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006, p. 76). Similarly, Abukhattala (2004) discovered that all ten Arab international student participants were surprised by the differences between the student-teacher relationship in Canadian universities and back in their home countries. For example, many never experienced informal relationships with their instructors in their home countries or the student-oriented approach in which instructors in Canada follow (Abukhattala, 2004). A study conducted by Sonleitner and Khelifa (2005) of U.S. faculty teaching Middle Eastern students in a university in the United Arab Emirates found that students had never experienced the student-centered approach to teaching which involves student participation in class discussions; partnership learning; or engagement of problem-solving and critical analysis skills. The scholars found the following regarding challenges experienced in a classroom where teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005).

Examining students' relationships with academic faculty advisors, Alazzi and Chiodo (2006) discovered that Jordanian graduate international students perceived problems with their faculty advisors in U.S. higher education institutions when the advisors' research interests do not match the students' interests or projects are not applicable to the Middle East region. Additional problems developed when faculty advisors' suggested research projects that were against students' Islamic beliefs such as found in natural science research (Alazzi and Chiodo, 2006, p. 77). Similarly, Mostafa (2006) found Arab Muslim international students expressed that students in Arab countries greatly respect the academic faculty advisor or supervisor. Respondents expressed that the academic faculty supervisor relationships in Canada is entirely academic,

while in the Middle East, it may include social and economic characteristics. What is more, in Canada, supervisors tend to respect students' ideas and opinions, while in the Middle East, the supervisor knows all of the answers, which are not to be questioned or criticized (Mostafa, 2006). Looking at student relationships with peers, Alazzi and Chiodo (2006) learned in their study of eight Jordanian graduate international students that participants restricted interaction with American peers for only academic reasons. Participants preferred to forge relationships with fellow Jordanian or Middle Easterner students or other Muslim international students who held the same Islamic religious beliefs (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006). The above studies discussed concerns of Arab Muslim international students in the U.S. and Canada regarding faculty interactions. In the next section, I will survey studies pertaining to the university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S. and international students.

University and Classroom Culture and Environment

University Classroom Culture and Environment and Arab Muslim International Students

The university classroom culture and environment in the U.S. in relation to international students have been studied by a number of scholars (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Cole & Ahmadi, 2010; Myles & Cheng, 2003; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Read, 2008; Rocha-Tracy, 2009; Sharma, 2008; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009; Zimmerman, 1995). Research demonstrates how all students face a variety of challenges in pursuit of acquiring higher education degrees. However, international students face unique challenges that U.S. students may not encounter as they experience diverse and new social, cultural, linguistic, and academic environments. When international students arrive for the first time in the U.S., they also experience detachment feelings as they leave their families. This

is followed by feelings of loneliness due to a lack of social relationships in the host country of study (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Read, 2008; Sharna, 2008; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009). More specifically, international students face linguistic difficulties; cultural adjustment challenges; feelings of alienation; perceived experiences of discrimination and prejudice; and difficulties developing social relationships. In fact, studies have found how factors such as perceptions of low expectations by instructors of international students' academic abilities; and difficulties establishing social relationships contribute to the withdrawal of international students from U.S. universities and return to their home countries (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Read, 2008; Sharna, 2008; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009).

Issues related to cultural adjustment has also been reported by international students, which has been examined by a number of scholars (Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Rocha-Tracy, 2009). At this time, I will outline a study in reference to culturally diverse immigrant higher education students as they hold similar experiences to culturally diverse international students. Rocha-Tracy (2009) examined immigrant students' experiences with higher education including academic barriers and coping strategies. Common experiences of higher education immigrant students include a lack of sense of belonging; perceptions of not being welcome by faculty; diverse cultural assumptions between immigrants and U.S. faculty or peers; lack of openness and cultural sensitivity by professors; and difficulty finding social acceptance. In addition, communication problems arose such as misunderstandings between students and faculty or inaccurate assumptions and stereotypes by faculty of immigrant students' academic abilities (Rocha-Tracy, 2009). Similarly, Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) analyzed the adjustment needs of international students in the context of their academic and social communities. Barriers students experienced in efforts to adjust included learning how to adjust to

the academic culture such as interacting effectively with instructors and interacting socially by making new friends. Other challenges described include English language barriers and experiences with low expectations by faculty (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

On a similar note, Myles and Cheng (2003) discovered that a major challenge international students experience when they attend higher education in a host country is acculturation to the new college community and culture. Graduate international students additionally experience anxiety due to pressure to maintenance of scholarships from their home country government or employment obligations back home after they graduate. Further challenges for international students include language and communication barriers; financial obligations to support family members either in host country or in home country; feelings of isolation; difficulty making friends; and loss of the social respect and status they enjoyed in their home country (Myles & Cheng, 2003). Studies confirm that the academic achievement is impacted by the social adjustment of international students, which is facilitated by social interactions with the host society (Myles & Cheng, 2003; Zimmerman, 1995). Research also demonstrate how as international students develop social relationships with others from their cultural background, their self-esteem increases as well as personal adjustment (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Myles & Cheng, 2003). It is suggested that language instructors can assist international students with adjustment by teaching cultural competence as well as language to students in order to avoid both linguistic and cultural misunderstandings that may occur between international students and members of the host society (Hinkel, 1999; Myles & Cheng, 2003; Stephens, 1999). Kim (1994) and Myles and Cheng (2003) propose that international students' adjustment to the host country also depends upon how the university welcomes them as well as students' existing knowledge of the host country's culture and language (Kim, 1994; Myles & Cheng, 2003).

In regards to campus climate and diversity, Bennett (2004) promotes creating campus environments and communities that value diversity amidst populations of racially and culturally diverse students that is prevalent among U.S. higher educational institutions today. Better known as the campus diversity movement, college campuses across the U.S. are striving to instill socially just and democratic practices by affirming and supporting diversity in areas of recruitment, admissions, and retention. Bennett (2004) explains how this requires higher education institutions to reevaluate and restructure relationship between campuses and the communities in which they serve. At this time, I will turn to studies that describe Arab Muslim international students' experiences in relation to the university classroom culture and environment.

A plethora of studies document Arab Muslim international students' experiences of the university classroom culture and learning environment (Abukhattala, 2004; Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Britto, 2008; Cole & Ahmadi, 2010; Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012; Earnest, Joyce, Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; McDermott-Levy, 2011; Mostafa, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Read, 2008; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Sharma, 2008; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009; Wisker, 2005). Mostafa (2006) expresses globalization brings more interaction between diverse cultures. Cultural diversity touches all areas of society including educational institutions. What is more, higher education institutions strive to bring international students from all over the world, thereby instilling cultural diversity within university campuses. Mostafa (2006) additionally highlights how the extent of cultural differences between international students and the host society impacts their educational experiences. In addition, the diverse cultural backgrounds of international students deepen the university atmosphere (Mostafa, 2006; Wisker, 2005). Cole and Ahmadi (2010) affirm that in addition to culture, religion is gaining wider attention by

educational scholars in recent years. Religious identity and participation is stronger among today's generation of higher education students than previous generations (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). As Islam gains more attention throughout the world, interest in Muslims as a group gains more attention. Cole and Ahmadi (2010) offer, "Yet the presence and unique needs of Muslim students on college campuses have received relatively little attention in higher education literature" (p. 122).

Existing research on Muslim Middle Eastern students discovered that negative stereotypes of Middle Eastern students affect their academic performance and self-esteem. Scholars suggest that in order to better understand cultural differences, teachers need to learn about their students' cultural backgrounds and histories (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012; Earnest, Joyce, Mori, & Silvagni, 2010). I would like to state that the notion of teachers learning about diverse students' cultural backgrounds and histories is key principle multicultural education as promoted by Oakes and Lipton (2009) and Manning and Baruth (2007) as well as of cultural responsive teaching as supported by Gay (2002).

McDermott-Levy (2011) studied the lived experiences of twelve female Arab-Muslim nursing international students in a U.S. higher education institution in regards to cultural adaptation. Experiences the participants described include living alone away from their families, which was an adjustment for them as they relied on their families for support and security in their home country of Oman. In addition, participants explained how they observed cultural differences between their cultures in their home country of Oman and in the U.S. including diverse ways of looking at the world. Participants further described how they learned to view the world from the American perspective while studying in the U.S. (McDermott-Levy, 2011).

Alazzi and Chiodo (2006) conducted a qualitative study of eight Jordanian graduate international students, which identified problems they faced in pursuit of their degrees as well as strategies they utilized to cope with those issues. Problems that emerged include socio-cultural issues including cultural shock and social interaction. Alazzi and Chiodo describe cultural shock as “a normal process of adjustment to a new setting” (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006, p. 73). Although participants of their study did not actually perceive cultural shock, Alazzi and Chiodo affirm that symptoms of cultural shock were evident as participants described feelings of not belonging; missing home; preferring to socialize with people from their own country; and not understanding cultural norms within the U.S. society. Participants further expressed perceptions of problems related to cultural differences in regards to educational experiences (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006, p. 73). Mostafa (2006) in the same way discovered Arab Muslim graduate international students expressed there is a significant difference between their home Arab Islamic culture and Canadian Western culture, which were signified in feelings of cultural shock.

In contrast, research conducted by Sherry et al., (2009) found that the majority of respondents from Asia, India, and the Middle East claimed they felt no problems adjusting to the new culture in the host country. The few respondents who did perceive a degree of difficulties with adjustment explain how adjustment problems were only experienced upon their initial arrival to the host country (Sherry, et al., 2009, p. 38). The scholars further discovered how a majority of international students studied perceived their university did not understand their culture. Participants expressed how they felt their university had little or no knowledge about their cultures. As such, participants deemed a strong need for their university to better understand their cultural backgrounds (Sherry, et al., 2009, p. 39).

Discrimination and prejudice. International students additionally reported feelings of discrimination and prejudices, which contributed to feelings of lower self-esteem followed by anxiety and/or depression (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) discovered that Arab international students (or students who look Arab) undergo more intense experiences with discrimination and prejudice in response to the events of September 11th where there is an intensified atmosphere of distrust surrounding Arabs and Muslims (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, p. 28). Likewise, Read (2008) identified how in 2001 after September 11th, there was a 1,600 percent increase in hate crimes against Muslims or people who looked Muslim due to the belief that Muslims are outsiders who threaten American society, beliefs, and values. The number of hate crimes declined since that period. However, in 2006, there was another ten percent increase in hate crimes against Muslims (Read, 2008, p. 39).

In addition, Sharma (2008) describes how research found that 44 percent of American respondents agree that there should be some form of restrictions on the civil liberties of Muslims living in America; 27 percent responded that Muslims in America should register with the government to show where they live; and one in six respondents were in favor of racial profiling (Sharma, 2008, p. 251). Sharma (2008) argues that the perceptions by American non-Muslims of Muslims as outsiders who are violent reflect a lack of knowledge and unawareness of true beliefs and characteristics of Islam. Such inaccurate perceptions only increase negative attitudes and hostility towards Muslims and Arabs.

Scholars assert how the effect of discrimination on international students from the college environment as well as society needs to be recognized (Lee & Rice, 2007; Sherry, et al., 2009). Sherry, et al., (2009) provides that although societies throughout the world today are accustomed to diversity, a number of diverse groups face unique hostilities including women who wear

hijabs or saris. Similarly, research conducted by Lee and Rice (2007) found that white international students from Europe, New Zealand, or Canada reported less experiences with discrimination than students from more diverse countries such as found in Asia, India, or the Middle East. This leads me to the next issue regarding Muslim students in the U.S., which is distortion and lack of understanding of Islam.

Distortions and lack of understanding of Islam. Abukhattala (2004) discovered participants of his study expressed that Canadians tend to have little accurate knowledge of the Islamic civilization, with the exception of what they learn from the media, which they describe as often distorted. Participants perceived that additional sources of distortions of Muslims and Arabs come from school textbooks in Canada. In addition, participants conveyed that some instructors demonstrated negative, incorrect, or biased attitudes towards Muslims and Arabs in the form of discriminatory remarks, which they demonstrated through class discussions and lectures (Abukhattala, 2004, p. 114). Similarly, Britto (2008, p. 855) argues that Arab Muslim students may experience conflicts at school due to the biased, distorted, or inaccurate representation of Arabs and Muslims in curricular and instructional materials and practices.

McDermott-Levy (2011) examined Arab Muslim international nursing students in a U.S. higher education institution and found participants described how Americans do not understand why Muslim women wear hijab (head scarf). Participants explained how many Americans believe the hijab is a form of fashion rather than a religious obligation to cover entire body and hair. Furthermore, participants express how a number of Americans inaccurately believe that all Muslim women are forced to cover their faces when Muslim women actually must cover their body and hair, but not their faces or hands. Finally, participants described how Americans are not

aware that Muslim women can not make physical contact with males who are not related to them at all (McDermott-Levy, 2011).

Abukhattala (2004) conducted a study of ten Muslims international students in Canada. He explains how Arab Muslim participants in his study perceive the hijab or head covering as a religious symbol and expression of cultural values and traditions. Islamic scholar Madani (1995) confirms that hijab is a head covering Muslim women wear to cover their hair. Madani describes hijab when used as a verb as, “to conceal oneself or hide from the view” (Madani, 1995, p. 121). According to Islamic Shariah law, hijab signifies the covering or concealment of a woman from the view of a man. Islamic Shariah law requires for all adult Muslim women to cover their hair (Madani, 1995). Abukhattala’s (2004) participants further describe how the hijab is an expression of a Muslim woman’s identity, which leads Canadian society to recognize women who wear hijab as Muslims. Participants additionally ascribe how Muslim women who choose not to wear hijab makes it difficult for others in society to identify them as Muslim women. However, Muslim participants themselves identify as Muslims. A further misunderstandings regarding hijab is that participants perceive that Canadians are likely to view Muslim women who wear hijab as victims of a patriarchal society where male relatives force women to cover their hair (Abukhattara, 2004, p. 124).

On this same note, all six female Muslim American or Muslim international students in Seggie and Sanford’s (2010) study described how their decision to wear hijab (headscarf) was completely their own without pressure from family members. They further expressed that wearing the hijab made them feel more comfortable within the campus community. In addition, participants explained how wearing the hijab was an important way for them to represent the ideal Muslim, while diminishing negative stereotypes of Muslims. “Participants explained that a

diverse and welcoming climate helped them live out their role as cultural and religious ambassadors of their world on campus” (Seggie & Sanford, 2010, p. 73).

McDermott-Levy (2011) study of twelve Arab-Muslim female international nursing students at a U.S. higher education institution found participants perceived they drew attention to themselves as they wore their hijabs (head scarves) in public. They described receiving stares from both adults and children in public places, which they had not experienced in their home country of Oman. Finally, participants recognized that wearing the hijab marked a distinct sign of difference between themselves and the American people. Yet, participants affirm how most stares from Americans were more of curiosity rather than hostility or fear (McDermott-Levy, 2011).

Exclusion and marginalization on campus. Seggie and Sanford’s (2010) study of six undergraduate Muslim American and Muslim international female students who wore hijab (headscarf) in a predominately Christian university identified how they perceived a mild degree of exclusion and marginalization even when they felt the campus environment was welcoming to their diverse religion Islam. What is more, the study found that religiously diverse students such as Muslims who wear hijab perceive similar experiences as ethically and culturally diverse students (Seggie & Sanford, 2010, p. 59). In addition, Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) found that Arab Muslims or international students who look like Arabs or Muslims may experience suspicions on campus resulting in feelings of being silenced about political or social issues within the campus community (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, p. 39).

Sherry, et al., (2009) identified a little more than half of Muslim international student respondents reported difficulties with the university community. Difficulties reported include feelings of social isolation or loneliness due in part from English language barriers; perceptions

of discrimination; frustration due to a lack of ethnic food including halal food for Muslims; and employment restrictions (Sherry, et al., 2009, p. 43). On the contrary, Cole and Ahmadi (2010) studied international Muslim students' sense of religious identity and engagement on a college campus in the U.S. in comparison to other religions and found that a majority of Muslim student respondents felt welcome on campus. In addition, a significant number of Muslim students had a roommate who was not Muslim and had frequent social interactions with people who were not Muslim (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010, p. 133). Sharma (2008), on the other hand, provides that many Muslims establish cultural segregation where "Muslims" choose to socialize primarily within their religious communities, sometimes immigrant or ethnic communities, rather than adapt to and live within the mainstream American non-Muslim society (Sharma, 2008).

Mostafa (2006) describes how Arab Muslim international students choose to socialize with and live next to other people from their home countries thereby establishing their own "sub-cultural group" known as an Arab or Muslim ethnic or religious community. Furthermore, Arab Muslims visit religious, social, and cultural organizations or institutions such as Islamic Centers or mosques where they maintain a connection to their religious and cultural backgrounds (Hodge, 2002; Mostafa, 2006). The educational experiences of Arab Muslim international students in relation to issues concerning their diverse ethnicity, religious practices, and cultures in the U.S. or Canada were analyzed by the above studies. Next, I will investigate studies pertaining to language and linguicism in relation to Arab Muslim international students lives in higher education institutions in the U.S.

Language and Linguicism in the U.S.

Oakes and Lipton (2007) affirm how the 1974 landmark *Lau v. Nichols* case established in the U.S. constitution a requirement for public schools to offer English language instruction

programs for students whose first language is not English in efforts to promote equal educational opportunities for all (Oakes & Lipton, 2007, p. 58). Looking at the education of second generation immigrant students, Gans (1999) points out that research reveals students who are integrated within their ethnic communities and are bilingual tend to perform better academically than students who are less integrated or monolingual. Gans further argues that research on academic performance of immigrant students that use grade reports and survey data do not provide conclusive evidence that bilingualism, cultural retention, or ethnic community integration are the true causes of academic achievement. Gans stresses that other factors such as parental support to achieve in efforts to obtain the socio-economic advancement which parents never had as well as student's individual academic efficacy should be included in educational research (Gans, 1999, p. 163). At this time, I will survey language and linguicism in the U.S. concerning international students.

Language and Linguicism and Arab Muslim International Students

Scholars attribute a key contributing factor to the success of international students in higher education classrooms is English language proficiency (Andrade, 2006; Mostafa, 2006; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009; Wisker, 2005). In fact, a lack of language proficiency can pose a major challenge to academic performance and social interactions (Mostafa, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009; Yeh & Inos, 2003). Research suggests that negative outcomes of language barriers include difficulties expressing articulation and impeding of higher order thinking and critical analysis skills, particularly in regards to graduate and doctoral students (Mostafa, 2006; Wisker, 2005). What is more, international students who may not be familiar with oral class discussions at times feel even more challenged in the higher education classroom (Sawir, 2005; Sherry et al., 2009). Studies show how receptive language such as

reading and listening is easier to perform than productive language such as writing and speaking (Cook, 2001; Mostafa, 2006, Ovando, Combs, & Collier, 2006; Wisker, 2005). A study conducted by Sherry, et al., (2009) reveals that international students perceived oral language barriers more than written language barriers. As such, students recommend higher education classrooms help them improve English proficiency in a relaxed environment where they must speak orally with others. In addition, students explained how they felt their written language challenges were adequately addressed by higher education institutions as can be witnessed by assistance provided by university Writing Centers (Sherry et al., 2009, p. 39).

Collinridge (1999) affirm that although higher education institutions require all international students to pass an English proficiency test before entering any programs of study, students continue to face challenges comprehending sophisticated academic terminology. The scholar recommends faculty provide more simple terms or vocabulary to international students to assist with comprehension. Additionally, Collinridge (1999) additionally suggests faculty remain aware of how international students may feel uncomfortable participating in class discussions due to language differences. In addition, students may feel uncomfortable speaking to the rest of the class due to their English language challenges or linguistic accents. As such, it is beneficial if faculty recognize linguistic differences when assessing class participation grades to international students. International students may also not be English proficient in regards to writing assignments for classes. For example, they may face difficulties expressing ideas in writing or with correct grammar usage. Collinridge (1999) further suggests that faculty ask students to submit a draft prior to the final copy so they can provide feedback regarding grammatical errors. Faculty may also recommend students to employ the use of the university's writing lab or pair them with a more knowledgeable peer who may proofread their papers (Collinridge, 1999). I

would like to add this suggestion echoes Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

Similarly, Barber, Morgan, and Torstrick (1997) identified how international students' competence and success in completing thesis or dissertations as well as performance as graduate assistants were influenced by their English language competencies (Barber, et al., 1997). In addition to developing English competency in academic uses such as writing and reading, international students must develop social uses of English by interacting and communicating within social contexts with their peers, professors, academic advisors, and other international students in English (Braine, 2002; Myles & Cheng, 2003). In a study of African international students, Heikinheimo and Shute (1983) found African students felt competent regarding their English language skills due to their previous exposure with English in schools in their home countries. However, they felt concerned about their accents and difficulties with understanding communication. At the same time, the scholars found that South Asian international students expressed difficulties understanding class lectures and writing lecture notes; participating in class discussions or responding to professors' questions; and making oral presentations or writing papers (Heikinheimo & Shute, 1983).

Mostafa (2006) studied six Arab Muslim graduate international students of a university in Canada. The study revealed that English is prevalent as a second language throughout the Middle East region. Yet, respondents conveyed they experienced difficulties with the English language both on and off campus in Canada. In addition, respondents explained it is difficult to understand the diverse Canadians' English dialects, usage of slang, and various English accents (Mostafa, 2006). On a similar note, Abukhattala (2004) examined ten Arab Muslim international students in Canada and found all participants had learned English as a foreign language while in their

home countries. However, their background knowledge of English was not proficient to enable them to successfully use the language academically or socially in Canada. Abukhattala explains how language learning in Arab classrooms is based on a reproductive approach to learning and is static rather than active (Abukhattala, 2004, p. 93).

McDermott-Levy (2011) studied the lived experiences of Arab-Muslim international nursing students in a U.S. higher education institution and discovered that Omani women felt they were comfortable speaking the British form of English which they learned in their home countries in Oman, yet they faced challenges in the beginning understanding the English dialect used in the U.S. As such, participants recognized differences in the level of comprehension during their communication with Americans (McDermott-Levy, 2011). This completes a survey of literature pertaining to language and linguicism connected to Arab Muslim international students in the U.S. and Canada. A synopsis of chapter two's literature review is as follows.

Summary of Literature Review

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to Arab Muslim international students' lived experiences as they pursue their higher education degrees in U.S. higher education institutions. Chapter two offered (1) an image of the higher education curriculum with a focus on Arab Muslim international students' access to the curriculum; (2) a survey of the pedagogical approaches and practices followed in higher education classrooms especially in relation to Arab Muslim international students; (3) an analysis of the interactions between higher education faculty and Arab Muslim international students; (4) a view of the university and classroom culture and environment as they touch the lives of Arab Muslim international students ; and (5) an understanding of the language and linguistic experiences of Arab Muslim international students in higher education in the U.S. and Canada.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This narrative study described the lived experiences of eight Arab Muslim international students attending a university in the U.S. including their descriptions of U.S.' higher education classroom experiences; encounters with faculty; and university atmosphere. The purpose of this study was to express international students' voices through qualitative narratives that describe their experiences in efforts to develop a better understanding of the lives of international students living in foreign countries. The goal of this study was to increase awareness of the growing international student population in the U.S. in terms of collegiate experiences in efforts to better meet their unique needs. The primary research question that guided this study was what are Arab Muslim international students' experiences with higher education in the U.S.? Subquestions consisted of the following: (1) How do they describe the university curriculum style in the U.S.?; (2) What are their experiences with academic development and competencies while attending courses in the U.S. higher education institution?; (3) How do they describe their relationships and interactions with faculty in the U.S.?; and (4) How do they describe the university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S.?

This study is a narrative inquiry that follows the narrative research traditions of Creswell (2007) in addition to Connelly and Clandinin (2000) in collaboration with qualitative data analysis procedures of open generic coding offered by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Patton (2002). Connelly and Clandinin's narrative inquiry approach consists of "stories of experiences" of participants as well as descriptions and reflections of meanings of those experiences (Clandinin et al., 2006). Since this study's participants hold different experiences than

mainstream faculty and students at U.S. universities, narrative inquiry's focus into experience can enable me to gain insight and share those diverse experiences with other researchers, faculty, and university personnel. Chapter three opens with a rationale and overview of a qualitative narrative inquiry design. Next, an outline will be presented of the study's methodology that includes the setting, participants, sampling methods, description of data gathered, methods of data management, data analysis, procedures, ethical considerations, and limitations that consider issues of validity and reliability. A rationale for choosing qualitative research and narrative inquiry is next.

Rationale for Qualitative Research and Narrative Inquiry

Patton (2002) offers a comparison of qualitative and quantitative research as follows, "Qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry" (p. 14). Patton further (2006, p. 39) describes qualitative design and methods including narrative inquiry in the following manner. "Qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest."

Creswell (2007) describes the unique characteristics of qualitative research as,

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem...The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action. (p. 37)

Qualitative research and narrative inquiry examine the meanings that participants construct of personal or social phenomena. Furthermore, they study participants under real life contexts and conduct holistic observations of the entire context in which social events take place (Gall et al., 2007; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research and narrative inquiry additionally arrange reports that convey their participants' descriptions and constructions of data, while recognizing that readers of their findings may form their own interpretations (Gall et. al, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) describes how qualitative research and narrative inquiry allows researchers to generate an abundance of detailed information about a small number of people thereby enhancing the researcher's and reader's depth of understanding about a particular phenomenon. Since the goal of this study was to understand participants' descriptions of their experiences with the phenomena of attending a higher education institution in the U.S., I found that qualitative research and narrative inquiry approaches were the most appropriate. Theoretical perspectives that built the theoretical framework of this inquiry include (a) socio-cultural theory of learning; (b) multicultural curricular theory; (c) identity theory; and (d) critical race theory. A look at the philosophical assumptions, knowledge paradigm, and theoretical traditions followed for this study is next.

Philosophical Assumptions, Knowledge Paradigm, and Theoretical Traditions

Narrative Inquiry Traditions

The research technique that guided this study is narrative inquiry. Creswell (2007) illustrates the method of narrative inquiry as follows. "As a method, it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals" (p. 54). To elaborate, individuals' personal narratives can disclose cultural and social themes through the lens of their cultural, social, and life experiences. Hence, the main feature of narrative inquiry is "narratives offer especially

translucent windows into cultural and social meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 116). In addition, narrative inquiry can be a phenomenon of study such as people’s life stories of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Narrative inquiry refers to “stories of experiences” of participants as well as descriptions and reflections of meanings of those experiences. The philosophical assumption that informed this narrative inquiry is Dewey’s educational philosophy that recognizes people’s lived experiences; understands and reflects upon those experiences; and makes connections between various experiences or continuity of experiences (Clandin et al., 2000). Regarding knowledge paradigm, narrative inquiry analyzes participants’ ways of knowing through their memories of lived experiences (Clandinin et al., 2000).

Narrative inquiry as an educational research methodology. Narrative inquiry as a research methodology for education can be better understood in terms of shifts of the conceptualization of knowledge and research. Clandinin et al. (2006) additionally elaborate on how narrative inquiry research is continuous and ever-changing as the lives and experiences of participants are constantly moving forward and fluid. It is also imperative to remember from where participants come from or their backgrounds. That is, researchers must acknowledge participants’ histories. Thus, “the narrative research text is fundamentally a temporal text—about what has been, what is now, and what is becoming” (Clandinin, et al., 2006, p. 23). It is additionally important for researchers to recognize the multiple perspectives and voices that may conflict, but must be present to show balance in a narrative inquiry (Clandinin et al, 2006).

This study focused on cultural, social, linguistic, and academic aspects of eight participants in a university by examining their multiple ways of knowing or interpreting their lived experiences. As such, narrative inquiry complimented this study’s purpose. Additionally, this study employed narrative inquiry as a tool to enable Arab Muslim international students who are

not native English speakers, yet English proficient, to share their lived experiences by enabling their voices to be communicated, recognized, and understood. A description of the design of this study including procedures that I followed is presented next.

Design of Study

Setting, Participants, and Sampling

Research site. The setting of this study was Rolling Meadow's University (a pseudonym) as it is home to a significant number of international students (938 international students) including Arab Muslims. Rolling Meadow's University is a Midwestern urban higher education institution and is home to 15,492 students, out of which 14,098 attend courses on campus as of the fall semester of 2011 (University Catalog, 2011). More specifically, there are 8,740 on campus undergraduate students, 5,358 graduate students, and 1,394 high school students who are dual enrolled at Rolling Meadow's University. There are 979 instructors teaching at Rolling Meadow's University of which 539 are full time and 440 part time. This leaves a total of one faculty member for every 12 students at Rolling Meadow's University. In addition, 95 percent of all instructors hold either a doctorate degree or the highest degree available for their field. Regarding diversity at Rolling Meadow's University, 9,688 students identified as White; 1,780 identified as Black non-Hispanic; 804 identified as Asian; 676 identified as Hispanic/Latino; and 926 identified as Non-resident International students. Students at Rolling Meadow's University come from the 50 states of the U.S. as well as 73 countries from around the world. As of the fall 2011 semester, there were a total of 938 international students who attended Rolling Meadow's University (University Catalog, 2011).

There are ten academic disciplines offered by Rolling Meadow's University including Arts and Sciences, Biological Sciences, Business and Public Administration, Music and Dance,

Dentistry, Education, Computing and Engineering, Law, Nursing, and Pharmacy. International students at Rolling Meadow's University are directed by the International Student Affairs Office (ISAO), the School of Graduate Studies, as well as each student's individual academic discipline's departments (ISAO, 2011). In addition, the Language Center at Rolling Meadow's University facilitates with English language transition and progression for those international students who are conditionally admitted to Rolling Meadow's University due to their English language proficiency levels (i.e. TOEFL exam score of below 550) (Language Center, 2011).

In addition to the International Student Council whose members include international students from all nationalities, Rolling Meadow's University hosts a number of International Student Associations that focus on individual nationalities such as the European Club, the United Students of Asia, the Turkish Student Association, the Association of Latin American Students, Chinese Students and Scholars Organization, the Pakistani Student Association, and the Muslim Student Association to name just a few (ISAO, 2011). A look at this study's participants and sampling strategies is next.

Participants and Sampling Strategies

Eight Arab Muslim international students who are graduate students were participants of this study. Miles and Huberman (1994) assert, "Qualitative researchers usually work with *small* samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth – unlike quantitative researchers, who aim for larger numbers of context-stripped cases and seek statistical significance" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27).

Furthermore, qualitative sampling techniques are purposeful, while quantitative sampling is random. Thus, this study's sampling selection methods was purposeful as I needed to select participants and sites that could "purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem

and central phenomenon on the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). More specifically, I used a collaboration of snowball and criterion sampling methods as suggested by Patton (2002) and Creswell (2007) to apply to qualitative research studies. Snowball sampling methods “is an approach for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 237). Patton describes criterion sampling as, “The logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance...” (Patton, 2002, p. 238).

This study implemented the following criteria for selecting participants.

- (a) Pursuing either an undergraduate or graduate degree at Rolling Meadow’s University;
- (b) Registered as an international student at Rolling Meadows’ University;
- (c) Came from a country from the Middle East, Arabian Gulf, or North African regions;
- (d) Proficient in the English language in both oral and written forms;
- (e) Completed at least two semesters at Rolling Meadows’ University;
- (g) Consisted of four males and four females (equal number of genders); and
- (h) Attending any discipline at Rolling Meadow’s University.

Procedures for finding and recurring participants for this study included the following.

- First, I used a snowball sampling technique to help find information of how to contact the Arab Muslim international student community by contacting the International Student Affairs Office (ISAO); Language Center; and the Muslim Student Association (MSA) at Rolling Meadows University.
- Second, I sent a call to participate in a research study letter (Appendix A) to the Arab Muslim international student community at Rolling Meadows University. More specifically, the ISAO and MSA forwarded this letter to all Arab Muslim international students.

- Third, I employed a criterion sampling technique to screen participants for this study (Appendix B), which narrowed the pool of participants down to eight (equal number in gender of four males and four females).
- Fourth, once participants were selected, I distributed consent forms for them to sign (Appendix C).

Procedures for this study follow qualitative purposeful sampling techniques as well as conform to Human Subjects Protection of Institutional Review Board's regulation for research. In addition, participants selected for this study represent a range of disciplines, gender, and years of study among the sixteen respondents Arab Muslim international students at Rolling Meadows University. Participant selection began by sending a call to participate in a study letter (Appendix A) to the Arab Muslim student community via the International Students Affairs Office (ISAO), Language Center, and Muslim Student Association (MSA). Once the call to participate in a study letter was sent, sixteen students responded. At this point I asked respondents to complete a demographic sample survey (Appendix B), which allowed me to narrow the participants as well as to obtain the greatest stratification of backgrounds, disciplines, and experiences to examine for this study.

After collecting the demographic sample surveys, I asked each of the sixteen respondents to undergo a screening process where I assessed their level of English proficiency by asking them to answer one written narrative question and one oral interview question. This study's "Demographic Survey for Sampling" form (Appendix B) displays the written question which I asked respondents to answer in the form of a sample written narrative: "Why did you choose to study in the U.S.?" to determine their linguistic eligibility to participate in this study. Next, I evaluated and narrowed the population to eight participants. Participants were stratified

according to gender, nationality, disciplines of study, degrees pursued, and years of study at this institution. Table 1 reflects the background of the sixteen respondents as well as the reasons for selecting or not selecting them as participants for this study. Please note that the shaded areas indicate the eight participants who volunteered to participate as well as who met the study's criteria for selection of participants. After the eight participants were selected, the human subjects consent form "Consent for Participation in a Research Study" (Appendix C) was distributed to each participant to sign.

Table 1

Considerations for Selecting Participants

Name	Gender	Nationality	Discipline of Study	Degree Pursuing	Years of Study	Select as Participant	Reason for not selecting respondent
Amjad	Male	Syrian	Biology	Master's	2	No	Not in U.S. at this time
Natasha	Female	Russian	English	Master's	3	No	Not Arab or Muslim
Nadia	Female	Lebanon	Political Science	Master's	2	Yes	Respondent selected.
Lucia	Female	Italian	Marketing	Master's	2	No	Not Arab or Muslim
Yin	Male	Chinese	Chemistry	Master's	3	No	Not Arab or Muslim
Sara	Female	Turkey (Arab)	Special Education	Specialization Spec. Ed.	3	Yes	Respondent selected.
Chandra	Female	Indian	Computer Science	Master's	2	No	Not Arab or Muslim
Fadi	Male	Iraq	Geoscience	PhD	3	Yes	Respondent selected.
Basam	Male	Saudi Arabia	Law	Master's	2	No	Not in U.S. at this time
Farooq	Male	Iraq	Geoscience	Master's	2	No	Changed mind.
Fatima	Female	Saudi Arabia	Economics	Master's	2	Yes	Respondent selected for study
Jewad	Male	Libya	Biology	Master's	2	No	Changed mind.
Malik	Male	Kuwait/ Egypt	Computer Science	Master's	2	Yes	Respondent selected.
Yaser	Male	Morocco	Biological Science	PhD	5	Yes	Respondent selected.
Ishmail	Male	Turkey (Turkish Arab)	Computer Education Technology	Master's/ IPhD	3	Yes	Respondent selected.
Rania	Female	Saudi Arabia	Economics	Master's	2	Yes	Respondent selected.

** Pseudonyms were used in place of students' actual names to protect their identities.

After sampling techniques were implemented including a preliminary screening of respondents, eight participants were selected who met the criteria of the study. The eight participants who volunteered to share their collegiate lived experiences with me consist of Nadia, a second year Master's student in Political Science focusing on International Relations from Lebanon; Fadi, a third year PhD student majoring in Geosciences and Biology from Iraq; Fatima, a second year Master's student majoring in Economics from Saudi Arabia; Malik, a second year Master's in Computer Science student from Kuwait who attended higher education in Egypt; Ishmael, a third year Computer Education Technology student from Turkey; Rania, a second year Master's student in Economics from Saudi Arabia; Sara, a third year Specialization in Special Education student from Turkey; and Yaser, a fifth year PhD student in Biological Sciences and Geology who is from Morocco. Once consent forms (Appendix C) were signed by participants, I distributed the Narratives of Lived Experiences (Appendix D) to them to begin the data collection process. A description of the data collection procedures and data sources is as follows.

Data Collection Procedures and Field Texts (Data Sources)

The following section presents a description of data collection methods followed for this study as well as defines the study's data sources. Field texts (data sources) used for this narrative inquiry include narratives and follow-up interviews. All data collected echo this study's research questions (Maxwell, 2005).

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures for this study lasted for four months. Initially, each participant was asked to complete a narrative about their lived collegiate experiences which was recorded in a journal. Next, I conducted either face-to-face or telephone follow-up interviews with each

participant that lasted for one hour. All face to face interviews were conducted at Rolling Meadows University (pseudonym). In efforts to analyze the thick, rich details of the lived experiences of Arab Muslim international students as well as their descriptions and reflections of meanings of those experiences, two types of field texts (data sources) were collected – narratives and follow-up interviews. A description of the types of field texts collected as well as the procedures used for data collection is next.

Narratives. A narrative is a term that may refer to a text, a discourse, or a “text used within the context of a mode of inquiry in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2007, p. 54). As a qualitative research method, a narrative “begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (Creswell, 2007, p. 54). In addition, narrative inquiry is “stories of experiences” of participants as well as descriptions and reflections of meanings of those experiences (Clandinin et al., 2006). This study asked participants to record their lived experiences both inside and outside the university classroom in the form of stories in a journal. In particular, these stories are written narratives that reflect participants’ descriptions of their experiences with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty in higher education classrooms in the U.S. To satisfy the qualitative dimension of narrative inquiry, open-ended questions in the form of journal prompts regarding participants’ lived experiences as well as their descriptions and reflections of meanings of those experiences guided the narratives (Creswell, 2007, pp. 57-58). Journal prompts of open-ended questions consisted of the following.

1. Why did you choose to study at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S.?
2. How would you describe your experiences as an Arab Muslim international student attending classes at this university?
3. How would you describe your overall experience studying at the university?

4. How would you describe your classroom experiences at this university?
5. Given your language background, what has been your experience studying in English?
6. Please share any additional experiences or thoughts at this time.

Participants were asked to write in their individual journals as much as they wished by responding to each of the questions or journal prompts.

Follow-up interviews. After reviewing all participants' narratives, one or two 60 minute follow-up interviews were conducted with each participant in efforts to expand their narrative responses regarding their lived collegiate experiences. The purpose of conducting follow-up interviews according to Patton (2002) is to allow researchers to "enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 341). A main goal of qualitative interviews is to obtain a better understanding of participants' experiences in relation to a particular phenomenon. In addition, follow-up interviews allow the researcher to convey participants' experiences to others through thick, rich description so that readers will be able to visualize participants' experiences (deMarrais, 2004).

This study followed an interview guide that consisted of a list of questions that guided the interview. More specifically, as participants describe their lived experiences during the interview process, their experiences related to perspectives of U.S. university classroom pedagogical and curricular practices; classroom learning experiences and environment; and interactions with faculty were recognized. Following Patton's suggestions for follow-up interviews, main questions developed for this study's follow-up interviews included first, elaboration questions that asked participants to elaborate on specific areas of their narrative stories. Second, clarification questions were asked to clarify areas that were ambiguous, needed further information, or required a deeper context. Third, contrast questions were asked to identify boundaries to responses (Patton, 2002, pp. 373-374).

Four of the follow-up interviews were conducted face to face on campus and four follow-up interviews were conducted via telephone in a secure room. All interviews were one hour in length and recorded with a digital audio-recorder. Interviews were later transcribed verbatim into a computer document file with password protection software that is kept in a secure place where no one has access except myself the researcher. In addition to the primary written consent to participate in the study, I asked for additional verbal consent by all participants to be audio-recorded in person or over the phone.

Follow-up interview questions were based on the following probe question framework.

1. Elaboration questions were asked to participants so they could elaborate on specific areas of their narrative stories.
 - a.) Could you elaborate on this response?
 - b.) Will you tell me more about this response?
 - c.) Thank you. Could you provide some more details?
2. Clarification questions were asked to clarify areas that were ambiguous, needed further information, or required a deeper context to their narrative stories.
 - a.) In this story, you mentioned this activity or experience was _____. Could you clarify what _____ means?
 - b.) I do not quite understand what you are trying to describe. Could you be more specific or provide more details?
 - c.) In order to better understand what you are trying to say, could you say more about this (activity or experience)?
3. Contrast questions identified boundaries to participants' stories or narratives.
 - a.) Could you describe how X compares to Y?

- b.) Could you describe how this (experience, activity, feeling) compares to another (experience, activity, feeling)?

To summarize, data collection procedures were opened by collecting participants' narratives of lived collegiate experiences which included their description of their experiences as well as reflections of meanings of those experiences. Next, follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify information presented in the narratives as well as to gather deeper meanings of participants' experiences. An outline of the data collection procedures for narrative inquiry has been made. In addition, a list of the two field texts or data sources in the forms of narratives and follow-up interviews that were collected for this study has been described. A discussion of data analysis followed for this study is outlined below.

Data Analysis

Forms of data used for this study were narratives and interviews. Data was organized by themes which emerged from the data and connect to this study's research questions. Data analysis was based on Miles and Huberman (1994) and Patton (2002) open generic coding procedures for qualitative research. After collecting stories in the form of narrative and interview transcripts of all participants, the following steps were implemented to conduct data analysis for data sources.

Coding

1. I began by preparing a list of codes that were derived deductively from this study's research questions and conceptual or theoretical framework that remained open to possibilities of additional inductive common patterns of meanings or codes that could emerge from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

2. Next, I labeled common patterns of meanings or descriptive codes that emerged from the data (i.e. narrative journal and interview transcripts) either via line by line “in vivo coding” or paragraph by paragraph identification. Each descriptive code consisted of a short word phrase that describes the pattern of meaning. For example, “classroom respects diversity” describes how the higher education classroom respects diversity. Thus, I assigned concepts to sections of data. I used central phrases that stemmed from the language of the data which are participants’ own words. For example, this study’s participant Nadia expressed the following in her narrative journal. “My classmates respect my thoughts and views too. No one till now has expressed any view or reaction that I can consider to be offensive” in which I placed the code (Class/resp/div) (i.e. classroom respects diversity) directly next to the narrative journal transcript text in the coded journal transcripts. As such, I have both the narrative journal transcript as well as a coded narrative journal transcript. This step reflects open generic coding procedures as described by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Patton (2002) where I first described patterns of meanings or descriptive codes by a line-by-line analysis of the text of interview transcripts, although not every line identified a pattern of meaning or descriptive code.
3. All patterns of meanings or descriptive codes that emerged from the data were listed in a code book (i.e. step one of enumerative and thematic coding for data). Descriptive codes does not interpret the data, rather it names phenomena (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).
4. As I coded the text, I placed each code in a code book by providing an abbreviation and definition that captured the main ideas presented in participants’ stories. All definitions

are connected to the theoretical framework of this study. For example, for the pattern of meaning “university classroom respects diversity”, the abbreviation is (Class/resp/div).

The definition attached to the pattern of meaning is “Arab Muslim international students perceive the university classroom including instructors and classmates welcomes, respects, and understands cultural and religious diversity”.

5. Next, I counted how many times I found each code within the data text. Although this appears as a positivist approach, managing the frequency of codes enabled me to identify patterns and themes in the data.
6. The next step involved categorizing all patterns of meanings (i.e. descriptive codes) and identified interpretive codes. As such, I reduced all data and developed interpretive codes by examining how descriptive codes formed relationships. For example, the descriptive codes “U.S. university shocked by hijab or headscarf”, “U.S. university demonstrates a lack of religious accommodations for Muslims”, and “U.S. university desire to better understand Islamic beliefs and practices” all form a relationship to infer meanings that developed the interpretative code “Islamic awareness” or the abbreviation (Isl/awa). In the codebook, the descriptive code “U.S. university should understand Islam” or abbreviated first name of US/und/Isl was given the abbreviated last name of (Isl/awa). Thus, the entry in the codebook was US/und/Isl (Isl/awa). Using this study’s theoretical framework as a guide, I asked what messages is in the data; how does the data speak; and what stories does the data tell? I then used this study’s research questions to assess the new interpretive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
7. Next, I identified themes from the data by asking what interpretive codes formed themes. To illustrate, the interpretive codes “U.S. university welcomes diversity” and

“experiences with cultural shock” formed the theme “U.S. university and classroom culture and environment is welcoming to diversity”. Thus, there are three levels present in the code family (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In summary, I reported findings from the data by asking (1) what meanings are communicated? and (2) how can I ground the meanings in this study’s theoretical framework? First, I defined each theme. Second, I used the language or quotes from data to demonstrate interpretive codes that constructed a theme. Finally, I connected all themes to related theory or existing studies including those present in this study’s theoretical framework.

Participants’ narratives helped me understand and answer this study’s research questions as well. For example, theme one “U.S. university and classroom culture and environment is welcoming to diversity” discovered patterns of meaning that relate to participants’ perceptions of U.S. university welcomes and respects diversity as well as experiences with cultural shock, which answers “How do they describe the university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S.?” This study not only described the themes that emerged from participants’ experiences through narrative inquiry, but described the stories that surfaced as well. This study utilized narrative inquiry to answer questions related to how Arab Muslim international students describe their lived experiences at a U.S. higher education institution in regards to their descriptions of university classroom’s pedagogical and curricular practices; university environment; and interactions with faculty. A description of data management procedures employed for this study follows.

Data Management

Data management procedures for this study consisted of storing all data from narrative and interview field notes, memos, and transcripts into password protected computer files as well as

two password protected portable flash drives. Additionally, all data transcripts were coded into a Microsoft computer software program, which were also stored on both computer files with password protection software as well as two portable flash drives with password protection software. More specifically, a file naming system was created in reference to the participants' pseudonyms; the type of data collected; the location site where the data was collected; and the date and time data was collected. All audio recordings and transcripts were labeled with the pseudonym name assigned to each interviewee/participant as well as the date, time, and place where each interview was conducted. Furthermore, I used a Microsoft computer program to assist in analyzing and coding all field texts (data sources) collected. A description of my role as researcher will be presented in the following section.

Role of Researcher

Maxwell (2005) describes methodology under qualitative research in the following manner. "Qualitative data are not restricted to the results of specified 'methods';...you *are* the research instrument in a qualitative study, and your eyes and ears are the tools you use to make sense of what is going on" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 79). As this study's participants are culturally and linguistically diverse, I assumed they may lack a voice in describing their experiences with U.S. higher education. As such, this study's goal was to gain insight of participants' described experiences with U.S. higher education; their identities in the U.S. university; and experiences with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty in higher education classroom by giving participants a means to express those experiences via narrative journals and follow-up interviews. Maxwell (2005) additionally provides, "...the research relationships are the means by which the research gets done" (p. 83). As such, for this research study, I perceive I was able to establish an honest and trusting researcher-participant relationship with each participant. I was

able to accomplish this by following Clandinin et al. (2006) suggestions of engaging in a dialogue with all participants where I listened to their stories with an open mind without holding a preconceived answer already prepared on their behalf. Since I recognized the importance of gaining the trust of participants, I presume they openly shared their descriptions of their lived experiences with me. A description of the delimitations including validity and reliability is presented below.

Delimitations, Validity as Rigor, and Reliability as Trustworthiness

The primary areas of concerns that needed to be addressed for this study were researcher bias, reactivity, and reflexivity. Thus, all biases and weaknesses were continuously monitored in efforts to delimit the limitations of this study. Validity in qualitative research methods depends upon the researcher's "skill, competence, and rigor" (Patton, 2002, p. 14). Reliability in qualitative research methods relies on the extent that a study is trustworthy and credible for both readers and participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). As such, I made every effort to increase rigor and trustworthiness for this study. A discussion of measures this study implemented in efforts to decrease limitations or weaknesses, while increasing validity in the form of rigor and reliability as trustworthiness is next.

Validity as Rigor

Maxwell (2005) describes the differences between the concept of validity under quantitative research and qualitative research. Under quantitative research, validity refers to finding an objective truth. In contrast, under qualitative research, a researcher's subjectivity is considered a vital part of the research study. In addition, under quantitative research, researchers develop controls against validity threats before the research study begins. On the other hand, qualitative researchers develop controls against validity threats after the research study has begun and as

threats emerge during the data collection process. Finally, quantitative research's concepts of validity and reliability focus on the accuracy of measurements and whether a study can be replicated. However, qualitative research's concepts of validity and reliability centers on the ideals of dependability and trustworthiness. Next, I will discuss the validity threat of researcher bias and how I address it in this study.

Researcher bias. Maxwell (2005) suggests qualitative researchers be aware of their own researcher bias. Researcher bias refers to the subjectivity of the researcher or bias where the selection of the data either matches her assumptions and existing theories or where the selection of the data “stands out” to be noticed. Considering that a characteristic of qualitative research is to include the researcher's assumptions, existing theories, personal experiences, beliefs, and worldviews, it is virtually impossible as well as unwarranted to remove all forms of subjectivity on the part of the researcher. What is important, however, is for the researcher to be aware of how her subjectivity could possibly influence the processes and conclusions of the study. In order to avoid such potential researcher bias, Maxwell suggests the researcher acknowledge possible biases that could develop as well as explain how she will confront them in the research proposal (Maxwell, 2005).

Regarding potential researcher bias for this study, I hold a similar cultural background as participants of this study (i.e. Muslim higher education students). As such, special care was made to ensure that I did not demonstrate any form of favoritism or empathy towards any participant's issues, challenges, experiences, or responses. In addition, this study conducted research at the same site or institutions where I attend doctoral studies. In efforts to prevent any preferences or subjectivity on my part, I selected participants whom I have never met prior to conducting the research study and whom do not attend any courses in which I am enrolled or have taught.

Reactivity and Reflexivity- Researcher as instrument. Maxwell (2005) suggests that researchers remain cautious of potential reactivity and reflexivity that may emerge during the research process. Reactivity refers to the researcher's influence over the setting or participants studied. Maxwell (2005) asserts how under a qualitative research approach, the aim is not to keep the influence of the researcher out of the research process. Rather, Maxwell (2005) recommends that qualitative researchers understand the influence they hold over the setting and participants and how to productively utilize it. More specifically, the researcher must understand how her influence could impact the validity of conclusions drawn from data within the study (Maxwell, 2005). I made every effort to continuously recognize how my own influences, privileges, and potential power over the research setting and participants throughout the research process may influence this study. At the same time, I asked participants to actively participate in the research process by reading, correcting, and verifying all narratives and follow up interviews transcripts to ensure that my influence did not overpower participants' true responses regarding their descriptions of collegiate experiences. I assume that their agreement to the accuracy, transparency, and honesty of findings of this study is a true agreement.

Reflexivity refers to how the researcher, "...acknowledges the impact of the writing on the researcher, on the participants, and on the reader" (Creswell, 2007, p. 179). Maxwell (2005) defines reflexivity as, "...the fact that the researcher is part of the social world he or she studies" (p. 82). Maxwell (2005) further explains how with qualitative interviews, the interviewer may have influence over the interview responses. Maxwell offers that in order to eliminate the interviewers' influence over the interview, interview questions should not be leading (Maxwell, 2005). As such, I reviewed all interview questions for this study carefully to ensure no questions were leading. Regarding the research write up, Creswell (2007) suggests that researchers

recognize how the write up will be perceived by participants. More specifically, researchers should keep in mind whether participants will feel marginalized, offended, or silenced by the researchers' writings. In addition, the write up can have an impact on the reader where he or she may hold different interpretations than the researcher intended (Creswell, 2007). In response to issues of reflexivity, I reviewed findings and conclusions of this study to ensure I did not include any words or tones that could possibly offend or marginalize any participant. Although I reviewed all findings and conclusions of this study to ensure that all participants' true voices were heard so no statements or thoughts were omitted or silenced, it is possible that there were additional thoughts of participants that could have been examined further (i.e. in which I was not aware) to share with this study's findings.

Rich, thick description of data. One strategy that this study adopted was to provide a rich, thick, or detailed description of the data collected in order to provide a clear picture of the phenomenon of attending a U.S. higher education institution. A rich, thick description of the setting and participants studied facilitates possible transferability of data and conclusions to other settings or participants that share similar characteristics (Maxwell, 2005). Regarding rich, thick description for this study, I provided detailed description of the participants and setting which enables readers to transfer information to other situations or surroundings (Creswell, 2007).

Assessment of participants' English proficiency. I assessed participants' levels of English proficiency by giving them a sample narrative written question to complete in addition to a sample interview oral question. More specifically, on this study's "Demographic Survey for Sampling" form (Appendix B), I asked respondents to answer a sample narrative written question "Why did you choose to study in the U.S.?" to determine their linguistic eligibility to participate in this study. Thus, participants selected for this study hold a sound foundation of

English to communicate effectively and safely with me in narratives and interviews even though English is their second language.

Triangulation. Triangulation refers to collecting data from a variety of sources or conducting a mixture of research methods or theoretical perspectives in order to minimize the possibility of “chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 112). For this study, I was able to triangulate data collection by collecting diverse field texts (data sources), which consisted of (1) narrative journals and (2) follow-up interviews. In addition, this study followed triangulation procedures by applying interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives of research from the (1) education and (2) social science disciplines.

Reliability as Trustworthiness

Reliability as trustworthiness when used in qualitative research seeks to develop an understanding of a phenomenon. Thus, those who will use a study in the future should “trust in its integrity” in order for the results to be truly useful in society. In order for a study to be trustworthy and credible to both readers and participants, it must be conducted both competently and ethically. It is important to note that participants must “judge how ethically and sensitively their words and perspectives are portrayed” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 64). The following measures were applied to enhance reliability as trustworthiness for this study.

Transparency. Reliability is a sensitive issue in qualitative research. In quantitative research, studies should be conducted so that others may replicate the researcher’s processes in order to form the same conclusions. However, in qualitative research, replication is impossible because the researcher’s experiences and assumptions play an active role in the research process. As such, in order to ensure reliability under qualitative approaches, other researchers should be able to understand the logic, assumptions, and interpretations of a study rather than replicate

them (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Based on this information, I provide interpretations that are concrete and grounded in data collected. In addition, I clearly outline the processes followed, which are understandable by others. Thus, the design and methodology of this study is transparent and grounded in a conceptual framework.

Moreover, I provided thorough notes of all narrative journal and interview responses and transcripts in order to ensure truth and stability. In addition, I disclose the decision-making processes that I made to gather, process, and interpret all data including how I formed conclusions so other researchers may follow all processes conducted in this study in order to develop their own conclusions. Finally, sufficient data was collected and represented so that, as a researcher, I was able to provide alternate interpretations of data and conclusions, thereby ensuring reliability and trustworthiness (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Ethical Problems, Issues of Power, Privilege, and Risk to Participants

Concerning the matter of ethics, this study abides by the ethics of social justice and equity that ensure the principles of fairness and equity in addition to guaranteeing the human rights of participants are upheld. Thus, not only do I wish to preserve this study's participants' individual rights, but I wish to acknowledge their liberties. Since participants may not be completely familiar with U.S. cultural norms, academic perspectives, and English language within certain academic or social contexts, I took special efforts to ensure that I did not take advantage of such conditions. To illustrate, I asked participants to read and verify all narrative and interview transcripts to ensure accuracy and truthfulness. Additionally, I remained cautious that my power or privilege as an American doctoral student does not reflect any injustices or inequities towards participants or their responses. As such, I strived to prevent any risks of harm against participants' human rights and liberties.

University of Missouri Kansas City's Ethical Review Protocol

As educational researchers step into the classroom as well as the home lives of teachers, students, and their families, ethical guidelines must be followed. As such, the university's protection for the rights of human subjects should be followed where informed consent that outlines how research participation can occur must be obtained (Clandinin, et al, 2006, p. 20). To ensure participants' safety, participants completed a "Consent to Participate Form", which highlighted provisions for the protection of human subjects. Also included on this form are details of the procedures that were followed for this study; the study's main purpose; guarantees of protecting the confidentiality of participants; statement of the option for participants to withdraw from the study without any penalties at any time; outline of any potential risks to participants; outline of potential benefits to participants; and a place designated for participants' signatures (Creswell, 2007, p.123). All consent forms were submitted to and approved by the university's ethical review protocol and board.

Summary of Chapter Three

Chapter three outlined the methodological approaches that this study employed to examine the lived experiences of Arab Muslim international students as they attend a higher education institution in the U.S. This narrative study gained insight into the described experiences of eight Arab Muslim international students as they attend a higher education institution in the U.S. including their descriptions of a U.S. university's curricular and pedagogical approaches; university environment; and interactions with faculty. This study's methods assisted me to address this study's purpose, which was to express international students' voices through qualitative narratives that describe their lived experiences in efforts to develop a better understanding of the lives of international students living in foreign countries. In addition, this

study's methods allowed me to attend to this study's goal, which was to achieve an enhanced understanding of international students in the U.S. in relation to their college experiences in efforts to better meet students' educational needs.

The qualitative research method employed was narrative inquiry, which focuses on the dimension of the lived experiences of participants (Clandinin et al., 2000; Creswell, 2007). According to Patton (2002), qualitative research allows researchers to generate an abundance of detailed information about a small number of people thereby enhancing the researcher's and reader's depth of understanding about a particular phenomenon. Considering that the goal of this study was to understand participants' descriptions of their experiences with the phenomena of attending a higher education institution in the U.S., I found that qualitative narrative inquiry approaches were the most appropriate. Regarding data collection procedures, this study collected diverse field texts (data sources) such as narratives and follow-up interviews as well as followed interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives of research methods from both the education and social science disciplines as a guide.

Turning to data analysis methods, this study not only described the themes that emerged from participants' experiences through narrative inquiry, but described the stories that surfaced as well (Clandinin et al., 2000; Creswell, 2007). This study utilized narrative inquiry to answer questions related to how Arab Muslim international students describe their lived experiences at a U.S. higher education institution in regards to their descriptions of their identities with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty in U.S. higher education classrooms. As such, participants' narratives assisted me in understanding and answering the research questions of this study. Regarding data management for this study, all data from narrative and interview field notes, memos, interim texts, and transcripts were stored into password protected computer files

as well as two password protected portable flash drives. Moreover, all data transcripts were coded into a Microsoft document computer software program, which were also stored on both computer files with password protection software.

Concerning delimitations of this study, researcher bias, reactivity, and reflexivity were the major concerns addressed. In addition, all biases and weaknesses were continuously monitored in efforts to delimit the limitations of this study, while at the same time I strived to increase this study's rigor and trustworthiness. Turning to matter of ethics, I made efforts to prevent any risks of harm against any participant's human rights and liberties. Finally, in order to make certain that participants were protected sufficiently, each participant completed a "Consent to Participate Form", which outlined requirements for the protection of human subjects. This concludes chapter three which surveyed the methods employed for this study. Next, Chapter four will present the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: PARTICIPANTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to examine how eight Arab Muslim international students describe their lived experiences in a U.S. higher education institution in terms of U.S.' higher education and experiences with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty in higher education classroom in the U.S. The goal was to enable Arab international students' voices to be heard by higher education faculty and administration in efforts to better serve international students' needs. The findings of this dissertation study aimed to answer research questions that were proposed in chapter one as follows: (1) How do they describe the university curriculum style in the U.S.?; (2) What are their experiences with academic development and competencies while attending courses in the U.S. higher education institution?; (3) How do they describe their relationships and interactions with faculty in the U.S.?; and (4) How do they describe the university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S.?

The participants' lived experiences revealed findings that were presented in the form of narrative journal questions (Appendix D) and follow-up individual interviews (Appendix E). Dimensions of participants' experiences harmonize with constructs presented in the theoretical framework from chapter one (a) socio-cultural theory of learning; (b) multicultural education curricular theory; (c) identity theory; and (d) critical race theory. The goal of chapter four was to characterize participants' lived experiences in the university and classroom in the U.S. A synopsis of each participant's personal and academic profile will be presented next.

Participants' Personal & Academic Profiles



Figure 1. Map of the Modern Middle East. (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2012)

Table 2

Participants Selected for Study

Name	Gender	Nationality	Discipline of Study	Degree Pursuing	Years of Study
Nadia	Female	Lebanon	Political Science	Master's	2
Sara	Female	Turkey (Turkish Arab)	Special Education	Specialization certificate in special education	3
Fadi	Male	Iraq	Geoscience	IPhD	3
Fatima	Female	Saudi Arabia	Economics	Master's	2
Malik	Male	Kuwait/ Egypt	Computer Science	Master's	2
Yaser	Male	Morocco	Biological Science	IPhD	5
Ishmail	Male	Turkey (Turkish Arab)	Computer Education Technology	Master's/ IPhD	3
Rania	Female	Saudi Arabia	Economics	Master's	2

** Pseudonyms were used in place of students' actual names to protect their identities.

Nadia's Profile

Nadia is an international student from Lebanon who is pursuing her master's degree in Political Science in the U.S. Nadia's native language is Arabic, yet she speaks English and French as well. Nadia holds a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from the Lebanese University of Beirut, Lebanon. Nadia's employment history includes working as a journalist at a reputable Arabic magazine as well as an English-Arabic magazine where her professional writings focused on politics.

Nadia relocated to the U.S. two years ago where she was married and moved to the Midwestern region of the U.S. with her husband. She also has a brother who is a physician in Michigan and a sister who holds a Master's degree in English literature and lives with her

husband and children in Texas. Nadia maintains contact with her family in Lebanon via Skype or telephone. Nadia expresses the following sentiment regarding her academic career. "Being in the U.S has also given me the enthusiasm to seek a higher degree and to be more involved in this field." Currently, Nadia is the Master's degree program in Political Science in the U.S. which focuses on International Relations.

Nadia describes faculty at the Lebanese University of Beirut where she attended her undergraduate degree as kind, highly educated, possessing strong background knowledge in their field of study, articulate, and cultured. In Lebanon, Nadia's higher education classrooms held stimulating class discussions where as she describes, "professors raised important topics that raised the interest of the students while at the same time raised or supported the points of the theories the professors were teaching".

Nadia illustrates how class discussions were carried out in the higher education classroom in Lebanon.

Discussions stimulated our critical thinking so we could think more ideas and visions.

These discussions allowed us to know other students' ways of thinking. We may not share the same ideas as them but we must respect those ideas. Sometimes these discussions allow us to come to a common ground between our different ideas to create a common vision of that topic and create results.

Nadia further describes Lebanon as implementing democratic ideals including freedom of speech. Lebanon also is home to an American University in Beirut as well as a number of French universities. Thus, Lebanon possesses a variety of universities that demonstrate high levels of education. Nadia describes how Lebanon differs from other Middle Eastern countries in the

region. She expresses that Lebanon has a number of economic, political, or social problems. However, Lebanon maintains a high-quality educational system.

Describing the U.S., Nadia conveys that the people in the U.S are multinational who come from across the globe. In order to accompany such diversity, Nadia perceives that the U.S. constitution welcomes diverse religions as it protects people's freedom of religion. Finally, Nadia believes employment opportunities and advancement are based on an individual's merit and qualification rather than their cultural or religious identities. In contrast, in Lebanon, Nadia explains, an individual's careers depend upon their religious backgrounds.

Yaser's Profile

Yaser is from Morocco, which is located in North Africa. According to the World Bank (2011), North Africa is geographically, culturally, socially, and linguistically closely connected to the Middle East as the World Bank addresses these two regions combined as MENA, which refers to the Middle Eastern and North African region. In addition, the Modern Middle East map provided by the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (2012) shown in Figure 2 in the previous section reflects how a number of countries located in North Africa are considered a part of the "Modern Middle East" region. As such, I include Yaser who is from Morocco as a participant of this study. In the U.S., Yaser is a doctoral student who studies Biology and Biochemistry. Yaser's native language is Arabic, yet he is also fluent in English and French. Yaser began his higher education degree in Morocco. He later travelled to France to continue his undergraduate degree as his field of study was more available there. Yaser explains how he eventually came to the U.S. to study higher education through a contact whom he met at the university in France where he was studying his undergraduate degree who offered him a scholarship to study in the U.S.

Yaser observes how the undergraduate classes in Morocco are large compared to the small-size graduate classes he attends in the U.S. Yaser further notes that in Morocco, there were fewer interactions with professors than in the U.S.; however, the size of the class as well as the class levels could play roles in that outcome. Yaser additionally describes how classes appear to be easier here in the U.S. than in Morocco perhaps due to that he was a graduate and doctoral student in the U.S., while in Morocco he was an undergraduate student. Yaser's family lives in Morocco where he maintains contact with them via Skype or telephone. In addition, Yaser attempts to visit his family in Morocco every one or two years in which he expresses, "but that is not enough".

Fatima's Profile

Fatima is an international student from Saudi Arabia and attends the Master's of Economics program in the U.S. Fatima's native language is Arabic; however, she speaks English as well. Fatima lives here in the U.S. with her husband and two-year-old son. Her brother and cousin live in the U.S. as well. In fact, Fatima's brother and husband attend the same university as herself. Fatima and her husband are able to visit their families in Saudi Arabia each year over the winter school break. Throughout the year, Fatima keeps in contact with her family in Saudi Arabia by talking with them either by telephone or Skype. In addition to attending to her graduate coursework, Fatima also fulfills her maternal responsibilities of taking care of her small child.

Ishmael's Profile

Ishmael is an international student from Turkey who recently completed his Master's of Computer Technology Education degree and has begun his doctoral studies at the same university this year. Ishmael's language background comprises of Arabic, Turkish, and English.

At the university in Turkey where Ishmael attended, one-quarter of Ishmael's courses were in English; however, those courses were under the British educational and language system.

Ishmael holds a Bachelor's degree in Computer Technology Education from Turkey. Ishmael expresses how he had a lifelong dream to study in America. He fulfilled that dream in the year 2000 when he began his Master's degree program at a university in Texas. Prior to coming to the U.S. to study, Ishmael was married in Turkey, where he left his wife in order for him to study in Texas. After some time, Ishmael was able to reunite with his wife by bringing her to the U.S. Eventually, Ishmael and his wife relocated to the Midwest region of the U.S. so he could attend his Master's degree. Ishmael is happy working towards his doctoral degree this semester.

Sara's Profile

Sara is an international student from Turkey and attends the Specialization in Special Education program in the U.S. Sara holds a Bachelor's degree in Nursing from Turkey. She speaks Arabic and Turkish as well as English. Sara was employed as a Registered Nurse in Turkey where she met her husband at the Turkish government hospital in which she was employed. She later moved to the U.S. with her family so she could pursue her graduate education degree.

Fadi's Profile

Fadi is an international student from Iraq. He has been pursuing his doctoral studies in Geosciences in the U.S. since 2009. In 2004, Fadi received his Master's degree in Geology from the University of Baghdad. Fadi's native language is Arabic while English is his second language. Fadi notes that English is also the second language used throughout Iraq.

Fadi studies environmental geology with an emphasis on environmental pollution. He received a scholarship from the Iraqi government to study geology for his undergraduate degree

at the University of Bagdad. Fadi's employment history includes a career as a geologist and hydrologist for the Iraqi Geological Survey since 1979. As a geologist and hydrologist, Fadi searched for underwater aquifers in efforts to construct wells to store water for locations that are distant from adequate water sources. Fadi chose his career path because pollution is prevalent throughout the world today, yet the contamination of both the earth's surface and water sources is of deeper concern to developing countries.

Fadi recounts a vivid portrayal of life in Iraq.

All Iraqi's schools do not have sanitation's, sewer or rest rooms and tap water.

Moreover, all our universities are without electricity since 2003, with temperatures between 100-124 F most of the year as well as dusty weather. In my country, it is common to be forced to quit your study at school because of your religion or beliefs..., but here [U.S.] it is illegal to do so.

Fadi further describes his experiences living in the U.S. through a reflection of his life in Iraq. "I like American people how they deal with people from different cultural or religious [beliefs]..." Fadi lives in the U.S. with his wife who moved here in 2010 to join him. Fadi conveys that he keeps in contact with his family in Iraq through the use of the telephone, Yahoo Messenger video calling, or Facebook since he is not able to leave the U.S. while he attends school.

Rania's Profile

Rania is an international student from a city located in the Eastern side of Saudi Arabia. She is enrolled in the Master of Economics program in the U.S. Rania speaks both Arabic and English. She lives here in the U.S. with her husband. Rania chose to study in the U.S. when she was presented with an opportunity to study here. Other relatives of Rania who live in the U.S.

include her sister and brother. The rest of her family including her parents and remaining brothers and sisters live in Saudi Arabia.

Malik's Profile

Malik is an international student from Kuwait and is pursuing a Master's of Computer Science degree in the U.S. Malik began his undergraduate degree in Kuwait and later transferred to Alexandria University in Egypt where he completed his Bachelor's of Computer Science degree. He explains that English is considered a second language in the Middle East and Arabian Gulf as it is an obligatory course requirement for grades sixth through twelfth in Arabian countries. Malik describes the higher educational system in both Kuwait and Egypt as highly demanding to the point that many students including both those who are high performing and low performing request extra tutoring services in efforts to achieve academically in school. He explains that paid tutoring services have become a cultural tradition in the Middle East. Malik further asserts that students in the Middle East must pay for a tutor to listen to their comments or questions regarding their classes. Now that each participant's profile has been revealed, the four themes that emerged from the field texts (data sources) will be reviewed next.

Themes from the Data

Four themes emerged from the data upon analysis of narrative journal and follow-up interview transcripts. Those themes include (1) "U.S. university and classroom culture and environment is welcoming to diversity", which refers to how Arab Muslim international students perceive their university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S. is welcoming and respectful to diversity; (2) "Arab Muslim international students struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices while in the U.S.", which includes non-Muslims' desire to better understand Islamic religious beliefs and practices as well as the university's lack of

accommodations for religious practices for Muslims; (3) “Challenges with academic development including English language use”, which signifies Arab Muslim international students recognize challenges with academic development including completing assignments in English, communicating in English for oral class discussions, and interacting with faculty and peers; and (4) “Positive perception of U.S. university’s curricular and pedagogical approaches and practices”, which refers to Arab Muslim international students’ positive perception of the U.S. higher education system as high standards, high quality education, democratic practices by faculty, development of critical thinking skills, and use of advanced technology in the classroom and throughout campus. A closer look at each theme as it relates to data findings of this study is presented below.

U.S. University and Classroom Culture and Environment is Welcoming to Diversity

The first theme that emerged from the data “*U.S. university and classroom culture and environment is welcoming to diversity*”, which refers to how Arab Muslim international students perceive their university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S. is welcoming and respectful to diversity. Theme one consists of the patterns of meanings which emerged from data findings (1) U.S. university and classroom welcomes and respects diversity; and (2) students’ experiences with cultural shock.

U.S. university and classroom welcomes and respects diversity. The first pattern of meaning “U.S. university and classroom welcomes and respects diversity” describes how Arab Muslim international students perceive U.S. university and classroom as welcomes, respects, and understands cultural and religious diversity including demonstrates a curiosity towards Arab Muslims beliefs. Yaser, Ishmael, Malik, Nadia, and Sara all describe how their university in the U.S. welcomes diversity. Yaser, a doctoral student from Morocco, describes how most

Americans in which he encounters are curious or interested that he came from Morocco to study in the U.S.

Most of the people here, the majority of the people's reactions, was more curiosity. They were interested or impressed with the fact that oh you come from that far to study. And that is usually the reaction, a positive reaction. So, prejudices among Americans are very, very rare and it is not that big of a deal.

Yaser adds that he likes living in the U.S. as people he has met act kind towards him and want to know what it is like to be an Arab Muslim or about life in his home country Morocco. Yaser also expresses that he does not sense any prejudicial or discriminatory attitudes from Americans towards him.

I like it [U.S.]. Everybody here [in U.S.] is very nice to me. I never felt any prejudices or discrimination here. People here are very curious to know who I am as an Arab and from where I came from. They are surprised that I came from across the world to study here.

Similarly, Ishmael, a doctoral student from Turkey, describes how he does not perceive any ill-will towards him by Americans on campus as he feels welcome at his U.S. university. "Well as a Turkish I don't feel anything different being a Turkish or any other student. So, as a Turkish person, I don't really have any imposition or anything like that. I felt welcome." Ishmael additionally maintains that there might be perhaps one person out of his numerous interactions with Americans who acts prejudicial towards him. Otherwise, he does not experience any problems with Americans regarding negative reactions towards him as a Turkish Muslim.

Malik, a Kuwaiti graduate student, describes how he feels comfortable at the U.S. university as the campus community acts friendly and warm towards him. "The people [on campus in U.S.]

are friendly. I mean everyone was so happy with the system [social] and the people are so close and friendly.”

Malik, like Yaser above, additionally shares how non-Muslims on campus in the U.S. have a strong interest in Arab culture and Islamic religion as well as life in Arab Muslim countries.

“Americans are very interested to learn about us [Arab Muslims]. Americans are waiting to know more about my culture and religion. They enthusiastically want to understand me and what it is like in the Arabian Gulf or Middle East.”

Nadia, a graduate student from Lebanon, perceives Americans at Rolling Meadows University as “peaceful and friendly” since there is broad cultural and religious diversity in the U.S. In addition, Nadia believes that an individual’s educational background contributes to his or her tolerance and understanding towards diversity.

In general, Americans are peaceful and friendly people. Since U.S. is a mixture of different ethnicities, people are more adapted to the idea of having different cultures and religions in one nation. However, the educational and intellectual level of the people can play a role in accepting the other or as rejecting him.

Sara, a graduate student from Turkey, also describes Americans at Rolling Meadows University as friendly and warm, while actually believing that they would take the time to greet her unlike in her home country Turkey where most people in public settings do not act friendly towards her.

Here [at university in U.S.], not everybody walks on the streets. When I walk here, people look at me. Everyone in the U.S. says “Hi” to each other and to me when you walk. In Turkey, not everyone says “Hi” to other people when they walk. American people are warm and say “Hi” without knowing me. They don’t have any prejudice [towards] others

or [towards] me.

In addition to being warm and friendly, Fadi and Rania found people at their university in the U.S. to be helpful and supportive where even non-Muslims were very kind and hospitable towards them. Fadi, a doctoral student from Iraq, reveals the following peaceful attitudes by Americans towards his Muslim family in the U.S.

Most help that I have gotten here [came] from non-Muslim families, Christians, or non-religious. I felt Islam here, but I do not see Muslims. In reality, when my wife and two daughters came to join me in September 2010, the American families helped me with all home stuff that we need. Also, ISA [International Students Association] gave my family a welcome gift as it is happens in our culture.

Rania, a graduate student from Saudi Arabia, also discovered optimistic experiences with Americans and non-Muslims at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. “Some people here [at university in U.S.] love my culture and others don’t care. Until now, I did not see that kind of person who doesn’t work with me [class partnership learning activities] for just my ethnic identity”.

Yaser, Malik, Sara, Rania, and Nadia further describe how they have a fascination with diverse cultures of the U.S. as well as affirm that cultural diversity in the U.S. was a main attraction for choosing to come to the U.S. to study. To illustrate, Yaser from Morocco describes how the feature of Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. that he notices the most is the diversity on campus. “Also the universities here [in U.S.], the biggest thing I see is the diversity.” Yaser further expresses that at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. he can discover new cultures. “I can discover a new culture, to learn new things...” Yaser adds that a

primary reason he chose to study in the U.S. is to interact with diverse cultures. “The reason why I came to the U.S. to study at the university is to see different cultures.”

Likewise, Malik from Kuwait explains that he preferred to study in the U.S. so he could interact with diverse cultural groups. “...I heard that the U.S. has people from all over the world here so I wanted to come here to meet people from different cultures.”

Similarly, Sara from Turkey explains how the cultural diversity is a major reason why she came to the U.S. to study. In fact, she also recommends for other students from Turkey to come to the U.S. to experience the cultural diversity.

And to see different cultures, diversity, lots of diversity in the United States...Lots of cultures, lots of religions, lots of diversity and I like to see it. And they [students from Turkey] want to see it [U.S.] because nobody who comes from Turkey knows anything about other cultures, other people. They can...come see lots of diversity here.

Rania from Saudi Arabia also expresses how she likes the university in the U.S. as the cultural diversity is a key feature of her fondness of America. “I like it here [at university in U.S.]. Also, I know many cultures. America has many cultures because America is multicultural. There is many cultures here.”

Similarly, Nadia from Lebanon shares how she chose to study in the U.S. rather than Europe so she can interact with different cultures. “I chose the U.S. over other countries such as Europe so I could meet people from different cultures.”

Fadi, Nadia, Ishmael, Fatima, and Sara all describe how their university classroom respects diversity. Fadi from Iraq describes how faculty at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. demonstrated cultural sensitivity and supportive towards his religious beliefs and values such as apologizing for discussing a topic that might be culturally inappropriate for Muslims in class.

Then I had an instructor [in U.S.] who knows a lot about Islam because he travelled a lot. He said I am sorry but I have to have a class discussion about boyfriends and girlfriends. I know this is inappropriate to your culture. I apologize for this. This instructor was very afraid from our feelings. I appreciated his concern for our feelings and beliefs.

Fadi's further describes positive interactions with instructors at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. due to instructors' cultural understanding of international students. "I do not have any bad experience being as [a] Muslim with all instructors [in U.S.]. It is perfect with...[everyone] and most of them have a good understanding for international students."

Nadia from Lebanon expresses that she wishes to be treated like mainstream students in Rolling Meadows University classroom, which can make her feel welcome and comfortable. "For me all what do I expect or want in order to feel welcome and comfortable in the classroom is to be treated as any other student in the class without any biased thoughts or treatment." Nadia additionally provides that she has never experienced prejudicial, racial, or offensive attitudes from either faculty or peers at Rolling Meadows University due to her ethnic or religious background. Nadia further conveys that faculty and peers respect the opinions she shares in class.

Until now I have a very encouraging experience with my instructors [in U.S.] concerning my cultural and religious identity. They respect my views and doctrine as I respect theirs' too. Once I had a conversation with my instructor about being an Arab Muslim. I recognized that he was very understanding and not offensive at all. My classmates respect my thoughts and views too. No one till now has expressed any view or reaction that I can consider offensive or racist. My classmates respect my thoughts and views too.

Ishmael from Turkey demonstrates that he feels welcome by faculty, peers, and the campus community at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. “In the university here in the U.S...., I always felt welcome by the university community, my peers, and my professors.”

Likewise, Fatima from Saudi Arabia expresses how she feels welcome at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. as most people are friendly towards international students. “Overall I feel welcome here at this school. People here like international students.” Fatima also offers how in the English as a Second Language course she attended other international students accepted her culture since they are culturally diverse like herself. “In English as a second language class, everyone has a different culture. They are accepting of my culture.”

Similarly, Sara from Turkey illustrates how she feels faculty and peers at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. show no reactions or prejudicial attitudes towards her diverse identity. “I feel that the professors and classmates at my university have no reaction to my cultural, ethnic, or religious identity. The people here have no prejudices against Muslims or foreigners.”

All participants from this study also feel that their Islamic community (Arab Muslim ethnic community) which is located near their university makes them feel welcome in the U.S. Nadia from Lebanon described her interactions with an Arab Muslim community in the U.S. as a way for her to participate in social activities and make new social relationships with other Muslims.

The city that I’m living now, there is an Arab and Muslim community, but since I [am] new here, I haven’t developed a lot social relations to this community...Now I am concentrating more on my studies, but the relationships with my surroundings would be greatly important to me because I am social person. I can’t sit isolated. And what I am hear from the people that I meet [is] that the [Arab Muslim] community has many activities and they have a mosque and a cultural center where they can meet and have

social religious activities. I would really like to share on all of these activities.

Yaser from Morocco describes how he has met few other students from Morocco at Rolling Meadows University so he perceives the Moroccan ethnic community at Rolling Meadows University is small. Yaser remarks, “The Moroccan community is small, but not very small. So other than that at my school, I know just a couple of Moroccans who go to my university.”

Fatima from Saudi Arabia describes how she makes social relationships with other Saudi female students at her university. In fact, they help each other with their studies. “...I have my friends here. And also I have my class, my friends. And we sit together and we try to help each other together for something [studies].”

Sara from Turkey explains how there is a Turkish cultural center in a town close to Rolling Meadows University where the Turkish ethnic community meet and conduct activities. “...We have Turkish cultural center in [my region] and they are doing cultural things like our celebrations...Yeah we are keeping in touch with the Turkish community.”

Fadi from Iraq describes how he meets other Muslims and Arabs at the Islamic community and mesjud on the other side of town from his university. “Yes, ...[Rolling Meadow’s University’s] Muslim community, I attend events with them at Islamic Center. Arab students at ...[Rolling Meadow’s University] has events and an Arab community.”

Rania from Saudi Arabia provides how she socializes with other Muslim female students at a coffee shop at her university. “No actually I took classes just with one friend. But there is we just like meet in the Starbucks some days or the girls call other girls and we meet each other.”

Malik from Kuwait describes how the Arab and Muslim community around Rolling Meadows University consists of Islamic Centers, mosques, and Middle Eastern markets where

Muslims meet each other including during the Islamic Holy month of Ramadan and on Islamic holidays known as Eid.

Yes, there are several American Muslim Islamic Centers around this area ...there is different Islamic mosques. There are different Middle Eastern markets around and eventually you've [Muslim international students] just been introduced to these places through the other students who came to [Rolling Meadows University] before even I came to this country. We get together on the different occasions in Ramadan, in Al Eid, which is the celebration after the Ramadan month.

Ishmael from Turkey declares how he feels he belongs to a Muslim community at Rolling Meadows University as well as outside the university that includes both Muslim and Turkish classmates.

Here, [in U.S.] I am a part of the Muslim community both at my university and in the city. I have many friends or classmates from Muslim countries. I also have some friends from Turkey who attend the same university as me.

It should be highlighted that Arab Muslim international students from this study additionally describe how Middle Eastern society and Islam are welcoming to cultural and religious diversity as well as follow democratic ideals. For instance, Nadia illustrates how there are numerous cultural and religious groups who live peacefully together in her home country Lebanon.

Cultural diversity exists in Lebanon. In Lebanon, we have 18 sects. We have Muslims (Shia, Sunni, Alawite, Drus). Under Christians, you have the Maronites, orthodox, Catholics, all with more diverse churches)... Lebanon is a really unique country in this diversity. We have a very rich cultural experience because every sect has a rich culture that affects other cultural sects... When you visit Lebanon, you can go to places where the main

residents are Christians and other places which are only Muslims... In Lebanon, it is because of the political system that includes representatives from Christians and Muslims.

Fadi from Iraq offers that Arab Muslims love diverse cultural and religious groups as well as their diverse ideas.

Muslims or Arabs are normal people like you, but unfortunately bad religious people make bad picture of us...Now, that is the situation in our countries. However, as a normal people, we love all the people and we do not look to their ethnic [or] religious [backgrounds] and [diverse] thoughts.

Malik from Kuwait explains how Muslims are friendly, peaceful, and loving who like Americans and non-Muslims around the world. “Everyone needs to understand that Muslims are very friendly and peaceful loving people. We like Americans. We like people who are not Muslims. It is ok with us. We just want to get along with everyone in the world.”

Experiences with cultural shock. The second pattern of meaning “Experiences with cultural shock” expresses how some Arab Muslim international students perceive they initially, upon arrival at their university in the U.S., experienced culture shock or a recognition of cultural differences between what they experienced in their home countries and what they experience in the U.S. Yaser, Malik, Fatima, and Rania each describe experiencing a degree of cultural shock upon arrival at their university in the U.S. Yaser from Morocco explains how when he first arrived at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., he felt he “discovered something new”.

Looking back at my first encounters, it was just like someone who first discovered something new. I wasn’t familiar with the United States. It was very different from Morocco and from France. So it was very interesting to see those new things.

Malik from Kuwait describes how when he first arrived at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., he did not know anyone here, which made him miss his family in Kuwait. In addition, he had to adapt to new foods in the U.S.

Many Arab students who come to study in U.S. have a family member or friend already here to help guide them to settle down. I remember the first few weeks in the U.S., I miss my family and friends back home. I feel a kind of culture shock as I try to adapt to the new foods here and that there is pork everywhere. Muslims are forbidden to eat pork according to our religion.

In a similar manner, Fatima from Saudi Arabia depicts how she felt culture shock for the first few months at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. However, she later adapted to the new culture. “When I first came to U.S., I felt culture shock for a few months. Then I adapt.”

Rania from Saudi Arabia describes how she experienced culture shock when she first arrived at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. as she faced different cultural norms from Saudi Arabia such as desegregated classrooms as well as male professors who instructed her courses in the U.S.

I remembered the first week when I saw my class [in U.S. university]. There are 4 boys with us!! I was in shock. Also our teacher was a man. At the beginning, I couldn't work with them and I can't talk with my teacher, but after that time, I can handle it.

At the same time, it should be noted how one Arab Muslim international student from this study Sara from Turkey perceives she did not initially experience culture shock upon arrival at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. due to her experiences with diversity in her home country Turkey. In contrast to other participants of this study, Sara asserts how she did not experience any instance of cultural shock when she arrived at Rolling Meadows University in the

U.S. since she previously had interactions with diverse cultural groups in Turkey. "...when I first came to the U.S., I did not really have a reaction to the culture here because in Turkey, there are lots of diversity and difference of opinions. When I came here, I already had interactions to diversity in Turkey." This concludes the theme of "*U.S. university and classroom culture and environment is welcoming to diversity*". A look at this study's second emergent theme "*Arab Muslim students struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices in U.S.*" is next.

Arab Muslim Students Struggle with their Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds and Religious Practices in U.S

The second emergent theme from data findings is "*Arab Muslim students struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices at university in U.S.*". Theme two was constructed by the following patterns of meanings from the data (1) awareness of ethnic background and religious identity at university in U.S.; (2) U.S. university's desire to better understand Islamic beliefs and practices; (3) U.S. university's positive or shocked reactions towards hijab (headscarf); and (4) U.S. university demonstrates a lack of religious accommodations for Muslims.

Awareness of ethnic background and religious identity at university in U.S. The first pattern of meaning "Awareness of ethnic background and religious identity at university in U.S." demonstrates how Arab Muslim international students began to be aware of their ethnic background and religious identity after they began living and studying at their university. All participants from this study demonstrate an awareness of their ethnic backgrounds and religious identity while at their university in the U.S. Concerning his identity as a Turkish Muslim international student in the U.S., Ishmael remarks that he feels welcome and does not feel others

see him differently because he is Turkish. “Well as a Turkish I don’t feel anything different being a Turkish or any other student. So, as a Turkish person, I don’t really have any imposition or anything like that. I felt welcome.”

Sara depicted Turkish people as warm, hospitable, and educated. “I think Turkish people have lots of hospitality.... And warm, warm-blooded. And social and educated.” Describing Muslim people, Sara explains how Muslims are also hospitable. “...I believe [Muslims are] hospitable again...I usually know Turkish Muslims. I don’t know lots of Muslims around me.” Sara additionally asserts how everyone at Rolling Meadows University sees her as a student rather than as a Muslim student who wears hijab (headscarf). “I noticed that my scarf does not matter to the people at my university here [in U.S.]. Everybody including my professors and classmates see me as a student rather than as a Muslim or woman from Turkey. Others view my identity as a student.”

Malik from Kuwait illustrates how he perceives that his Arabic language is a part of his cultural background. “Your language normally express your own culture. I mean the way you talk, the way you express yourself, the way you talk with others, it’s an expression of your own language.” Nadia demonstrates how she perceives her classmates at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. act respectful to her Lebanese ethnic background and Muslim identity.

In my class in the U.S. a student knowing I am a Muslim Lebanese, asked me whether I am Muslim or Shia or Sunni. That student said that he heard a little about Lebanon, so he had some questions. I am a simple Muslim who was raised to be a Lebanese and respect others who are different from myself. This is how my parents raised me. That student said that this is good and he is happy to meet me and learn about people who are different to learn about their different ideas. We may disagree in how others live, yet we must respect

their differences to reach peace.

Yaser from Morocco relates this account regarding cultural and religious diversity at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. and how Muslims should remain open-minded towards that diversity, while maintaining their own Islamic beliefs.

Muslim students from either my country or other Arab countries before coming here to the U.S. to study higher education should strengthen his beliefs and have a strong education before he comes here. There is a huge diversity here. There are many different cultures and religions here. So a Muslim student must be open-minded for diverse cultures and beliefs.

At the same time, he must have his own strong religious beliefs or he will be at a loss of his own religion when he comes here.

Fadi from Iraq depicts how he as an Arab Muslim international student has only positive interactions with faculty in the U.S. “I do not have any bad experience being as Muslim with all instructors. It is perfect with everything and most of them have a good understanding for international students.”

Malik from Kuwait relates his perception regarding faculty discrimination or prejudices against Arab or Muslim students. “You can feel if an instructor does not like Arabs or Muslims from the way he talks to you, treats you, looks at you, or grades you.” Malik further describes how Arabs are social and eager to interact with Americans and non-Muslims. “Arabs are so social. If instructors wish to get close to us, we are happy to do this. We welcome this.” Malik also expresses how culture is a strong part of Arabs and Muslims’ lives. “We are so influenced by our culture. Our culture is our life. Our culture and pride of our culture prevents us from fully assimilating within the U.S. or western culture.”

Rania from Saudi Arabia reveals her experiences living as an Arab Muslim international student at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. “People here [university in U.S.] have reaction about my “hijab” and because I do not drink alcohol or eat pork, they don’t invite me to their parties.”

U.S. university’s desire to understand Islam. The second pattern of meaning “U.S. university’s desire to understand Islam” signifies how Arab Muslim international students describe how their university in the U.S. desires to better understand the truth about Islam and Muslims including their religious beliefs and cultural characteristics. In addition, participants would like non-Muslims to question the negative portrayals of Muslims in the media or news. All participants from this study except Ishmael expressed how their university in the U.S. demonstrates a willingness to better understand Islamic beliefs and practices.

Fatima from Saudi Arabia describes how she would like non-Muslim faculty and peers at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. to ask her about her hijab (headscarf) and Islam. “Everyone here [university in U.S.] and my professors should learn about Islam and why I wear hijab. No one asks me about Islam or why I wear hijab.”

Sara would like Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. to understand that Muslims are warm and social people. “Muslims are the same thing, the same character—hospitality, warm-blooded, educated, social, helpful, political... and they open the dialogue.” Sara further describes Muslims as peaceful and that if non-Muslims are open-minded to learn how Muslims actually believe and live, non-Muslims would welcome Muslims.

After people learn about what Islam truly is and who Muslim people are, people tend to leave their prejudices and embrace us. I would like for all people here to understand that Muslims can never be terrorists. Muslims are peaceful people.

Fadi from Iraq describes instances when faculty in the U.S. showed disrespect towards Muslim women who wear hijab (headscarf). “Sometimes instructors make fun of how the Muslim women wear veil. So I explain why Muslim women wear hijab. I told them we never force our women to cover their hair. It is their choice.” Fadi adds that Arabs or Muslim sometimes experience tense relations with Americans or non-Muslims. However, in general, Arabs and Muslims respect all people regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds.

Muslims or Arabs are normal people like you, but unfortunately bad religious people make bad picture of us. Please remember what happened in Europe about five hundred years ago when religious leader controlled it, they do not allow people to get any educations and killed scientists. Now, that is the situation in our countries, however, as a normal people we love all the people and we do not look to their ethnic, religious and thoughts.

Rania from Saudi Arabia relates how she would like Rolling Meadows University to understand that the negative stories told in the media are not always true. Rather, Rania declares that Muslims are peaceful. “Yes, and we told them it is just the news. You can see the truth... You know, we are really peaceful people, not like everywhere problems.” Rania makes this reaffirmation. “Everyone here should know that Muslims are peaceful people.”

Nadia from Lebanon declares that Islam is a peaceful religion that promotes finding common ground between diversity while instilling social justice and equity within society between all people, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

I would also like to say that Muslims and Arabs are peoples who have great values of humanity and generosity. Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness that should not be associated with acts of

violence against the innocent. Islam can play a positive role in reviving common values for mankind and uniting people for justice and equality, particularly the weaker sections. Muslims encourage greater understanding of other values and norms.

In relation to understanding Islamic religious beliefs and practices, Fatima from Saudi Arabia suggests that Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. provide a Mesjud where Muslim students can pray. Fatima additionally encourages non-Muslims to question negative portrayals of Muslims that they may watch on the news. Rather, Fatima recommends that non-Muslims learn accurate information about Muslims and Islam.

I would like [Rolling Meadows University] to make a Mesjud for us. They should also make special meals that does not have pork in it for Muslims. I want the people to know that Muslims are happy with Americans. The news on the television is not true that shows we are upset with America. Americans should read more about Islam to know the truth about our religion and Muslims.

Malik from Kuwait also suggests that non-Muslims learn what the reality is about the Middle East and Muslims rather than believe everything they watch from the media. “Go to the Arabian Gulf or the Middle East and see with your own eyes what is going on over there. What the media shows is not always true. Don’t judge what you hear from the media.”

Malik, Ishmael, and Yaser describe how according to Islam, seeking knowledge including obtaining education is a religious obligation for all Muslims. For this reason, education is a religious obligation to Arab Muslim international students as well as a way to improve one’s life. Malik from Kuwait also shows the relation between Islam and education.

Seeking knowledge has no limits or borders. It’s one of the obligatory in our religion ...And as the prophet Mohamed (Peace Be Upon Him) mentioned that you have

to seek the knowledge even if you have to travel to China.

Ishmael from Turkey describes how under Islam, the Prophet Mohammed said every Muslim should seek knowledge even as far as China, thereby Islam promotes travelling to other countries to gain knowledge or education.

The Prophet Mohammed did tell us that if science is in China you need to go and get your education in science education in China...and in my culture, the Turkish culture is encouraging people to get an education.

Yaser from Morocco also illustrates how a Muslim should go as far as China [from the Middle East] to obtain knowledge or education. “The Prophet Mohamed said you should seek knowledge even if you have to go China to get that knowledge.”

U.S. university positive or shocked reactions towards hijab (headscarf). The third pattern of meaning “U.S. university positive or shocked reactions towards hijab” illustrates how Arab Muslim female international students’ perceive that some people at their university in the U.S. demonstrate positive reactions towards their hijab (headscarf), while others display shock towards their hijabs. All female participants of this study, Rania, Fatima, Sara, and Nadia, shared their experiences with wearing hijab (headscarf) at their university in the U.S. However, not all female participants shared the same descriptions of experiences with hijab. While Rania and Fatima describe non-Muslims as displaying shocked reactions towards their hijabs, Sara and Nadia describe more positive reactions towards hijab. In addition, none of the male participants offered any descriptions of hijab except for Fadi from Iraq who expressed how one instructor at Rolling Meadows University appeared to ridicule the concept of Muslim women to wear hijab.

Rania from Saudi Arabia describe how her classmates stared at her and were curious about why she wore hijab.

It is ok for me because my classmates, [it is] the first time they saw the woman who wears hijab. And they just like keep...looking at me...And I told them, this is my religion. I keep my hair [and] everything [body] for my husband [eyes] only. It is not for everyone [to see].

Similarly, Fatima from Saudi Arabia shared how her classmates acted surprised by her hijab and Islamic long dress (albajah). “When I wear black hijab [headscarf] and albajah [Islamic long dress], Americans get shocked.” She further declares, “Some places away from this school [university in U.S.], the people are not as nice. Some people stare at me and are shocked.”

Sara from Turkey describes how she feels comfortable wearing the headscarf at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. “I can wear my scarf freely here without anyone telling me to take it off.” Sara strengthens her point as follows. “I noticed that my scarf does not matter to the people at my university here [at university in U.S.].” Sara provides the following account of life as a Muslim student who wears hijab (headscarf) in a university in the U.S. as feeling comfortable and respected by her classmates and faculty.

I feel comfortable with hijab [headscarf]. Nobody...stare at me I believe. I am respected here. I felt comfortable here as I wearing hijab...I was able to care about if people, classmates, teachers think differently about me. But then I felt I was comfortable.

Nadia from Lebanon also describes how as an Arab Muslim international student who wears hijab (headscarf) at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., Americans or non-Muslims do not show any disrespect or prejudice toward her.

...until now, no one has given me a bad comment or an offensive comment about my cultural background or religious beliefs or hijab. No Americans are racists. Americans are very friendly towards me. I receive compliments about my scarf. They said your scarf is so beautiful. They like my scarf. I felt no hatred from Americans.

U.S. university demonstrates a lack of religious accommodations for Muslims. The fourth pattern of meaning “U.S. university demonstrates a lack of religious accommodations for Muslims” exposes how Arab Muslim international students recognize a lack of accommodation by the university in the U.S. regarding finding a place and time to pray for Muslim students. Yaser, Fadi, Malik, and Fatima convey how Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. demonstrates a lack of religious accommodations towards their Islamic religious practices. Yaser from Morocco makes the following depiction regarding Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. concerning better meeting the needs of Muslim students by providing a place for Muslim students to pray the weekly congregational prayer (Jummah).

Maybe the university should know a little bit more about the Friday prayer...and prayer time usually because sometimes you have classes and it is not... Or because usually you work with people who don't know about what Friday is in a society for Muslims.

Sometimes some people will say I need two or one day off for our sacred day. And people [non-Muslims] don't know exactly about the time of prayers.

Fadi from Iraq illustrates how a parking lot at Rolling Meadows University is closed, which makes it impossible for Muslim students to pray at their Mesjud near the university, so he must drive across the city to a Mesjud at an Islamic Center to pray the Friday Jummah weekly prayer. “...[Rolling Meadow's University's] Mesjud is closed now and we no longer can pray here on Fridays due to problems with the parking lot. I also go to the Islamic Center in this city to pray Jummah as well as attend events during Ramadan.”

Malik from Kuwait declares that he can not find a place at Rolling Meadows University to pray his Friday Jummah weekly prayer. “Also here [at Rolling Meadows University] there is no

place for me to pray especially for Friday Jummah community prayer. As Muslims, we should at least have a place to pray on campus in between classes.”

Echoing this sentiment, Fatima from Saudi Arabia notes how she also searched for a place to pray at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. with no success. “I try to find a place to pray here [in U.S.] at school. Sometimes I can only find an empty classroom, so I pray there.” Fatima further asserts, “I would like [Rolling Meadows University] to make a Mesjud for us [Muslim students].” A review of this study’s third emergent theme “*Challenges with academic development including English language use*” is offered next.

Challenges with Academic Development Including English Language Use

The third emergent theme which came from the data is “*Challenges with academic development including English language use*” which refers to how Arab Muslim international students recognize challenges with academic development including completion of assignments in English; communications in English for oral class discussions; and interactions with faculty and peers. The third theme was created by the resulting patterns of meanings from the data (1) English language experiences in university classrooms; and (2) desegregated classrooms in the university in U.S.

English language experiences in university classrooms. The first pattern of meaning “English language experiences in university classrooms” illustrates how all Arab Muslim international student participants recognize struggles with their academic development due to English language barriers in university classrooms. Neither gender nor national backgrounds appeared to make a difference in the level of English language or academic development among the eight participants of this study. Fatima from Saudi Arabia explains how faculty should

understand how it is challenging at times to understand them since English is her second language. As such, she learns in Arabic and then translates in English.

Sometimes it takes time for me to understand what the professor said in the lecture or to take notes. Some professors, they did not understand how I learn in English. English is not my first language. They [professors] should know that. When I learn, I learn in Arabic and then English. Also, I do not have the chance to practice English.

Fatima additionally offers how faculty should recognize how she takes more time to study or learn than native English speaking students.

I take double time to complete assignments than Americans due to English language is second language for me. I sometimes ask American students to help me with assignments or to give me the lecture notes from class. It is hard for me to listen to the lecture and write notes at the same time due to English language second language. Professors should know how hard it is for international students to learn. Some professors don't care if English is our second language.

Similarly, Ishmael from Turkey provides how he takes more time to study, understand, and write in English than American students. "...Here [in U.S.] classes for me take time for me to study so I study harder than before. So I need to spend more time to understand the text and more time to write." Ishmael further declares how U.S. faculty does not appear to understand how international students learn in a different language than English and how they must translate the information to English as well. Ishmael further shares how professors should not use the same method of teaching international students as they do for American students.

I think that professors here need to understand that English is my second language and not my first language. They treat international students the same way as Americans and we do

not learn in the same way as American students. We have to first translate the information the professors give us in class into our own language, and then translate it back into English for them.

Fadi from Iraq explains that although he learned English in schools in Iraq, he continues to face challenges with vocabulary in English at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. “Most of references in Iraqi’s school are in English language and for this reason it is easy for me to understand the whole idea about the subject. However, sometimes it is not easy to remember the vocabulary when I want to use it.”

Rania from Saudi Arabia describes how she it is more comfortable for her to read in English than to listen to words spoken in English. “Yeah I think it [reading in English] is more easier than listen [in English].”

Reflecting upon studying in English, Malik from Kuwait expresses feeling challenged and frustrated learning in English as he must refer to an Arabic-English dictionary while trying to understand the extensive readings professors assign, which takes more time for him to learn than American students.

It’s not easy...Some of the instructors, for them, it’s normal to give you the homework. Go ahead and go home and just read this two or three hundred pages. For me, that’s an extreme challenge. Yes, I can read [in English]. Yes, I can write [in English]. But it’s going to take from me some time... I have to go back to my dictionary...I can’t skip it because maybe that word it’s the whole point for the article...We [international students] have to spend five, six hours, while at the same time, the American students basically use it [same amount of time] to read a specific article...sometimes the instructor or assistant deals with you the same way they deal with the American students. They have to

pay attention that we can't achieve, we can't accomplish the same level [English proficiency in reading] just like any other American student...And it's really frustrating sometimes.

Malik again stresses how long reading assignments in English can be challenging for him as he faces trouble completing short reading assignments in English. In addition, he enjoys class discussions rather than lectures where he must understand the lecture in English as well as write notes in English.

I can't read [in English] the way Americans read. Professor says, "Finish these 100 pages, then read another 100 pages." While I still have not read the first ten pages yet. I have to use an audio-recorder to take lecture notes. I prefer oral class discussions than a lecture from the professor. No idea or question is stupid.

Malik adds that a number of faculty members are culturally responsive to international students in regards to learning in English, yet other faculty members do not understand obstacles international students face learning in English, partly due to time restraints for the amount of time students spend in classes.

I do believe some instructors do understand this kind of obstacle [learning in English]. But others, they won't. It's not their fault because that's the system. They can't really slow down because they have a certain schedule and they have to finish that schedule at a certain time.

Rania from Saudi Arabia expresses how the major challenge she faces in class is to read in English followed by responding orally in English to answer questions. However, when she feels she needs assistance with assignments in English, she asks for help from Rolling Meadows University friends. "The time is big problem to me because I take time to read in my language

and then take time to answer in English, so I didn't do well because of the time.” Concerning her classroom experiences in the U.S. university, Rania offers, “[It is] not that easy because English is my second language. If I did not know how to do assignments or papers, I call my friends and ask them for help.”

Nadia from Lebanon explains how she is a competent writer in English including preparing written assignments or papers. However, there are times when she faces challenges expressing herself orally in English in class.

Since I am a good writer in English, I don't find much difficulties writing my assignments. However, sometimes I have an idea in Arabic which I consider important and I want to express it in English so I take some times to find the relevant words in order to give the similar meaning when I make an oral class presentation in English...I have no problem with critically analyze reading materials or textbooks in English for classes. Sometimes I feel that certain ideas are not clear, so I reread them again in order to get more familiar with them.

Yaser from Morocco explains how he did not face many challenges to writing in English for classes, yet he did face difficulties at times understanding oral English that is spoken.

I had no problems writing in English, really, maybe because most of my classes were science classes so I did not have to write a lot. Although it was kind of hard to understand the professors when they give lectures. After a year, it got better, but I still have trouble understanding them sometimes.

Sara from Turkey relates how she feels shy to express herself in English in class discussions. In fact, Sara perceives that faculty might display prejudicial attitudes towards her due to her

accent and issue lower grades to her because they perceive she does not understand course concepts when actually she can not find the right words to express her thoughts.

It is sometimes difficult to express myself in class in English, especially in class discussions or to answer professors' questions. I have lots of opinions, but I was shy to talk because I have an accent because English is my second language. When I talk to the professor in class, my voice is shaky and unsure. I am concerned if the professors have a little prejudice against me because my English is not perfect. They may give me a lower grade because they think I do not understand the question just because my English is not as good as others.

Yaser, Ishmael, Sara, Fadi, Malik, and Rania also recognize English language barriers including difficulty for Americans to understand students' words due to their accents as they try to communicate, convey messages, and express themselves. Yaser from Morocco describes how he felt frustrated because he could read and write in English, yet he faced challenges understanding Americans when they spoke to him in English due to their accents the first few weeks he attended Rolling Meadows University in the U.S.

...One of the things that was kind of frustrating for me was the language of English. Although I could understand how to read and write in English, when I first came here [to U.S.], it was difficult to understand when people spoke to me because the accent is different...So that was one of my first impressions of the U.S. It was very frustrating with the language. But, after some time, I got use to it.

On a similar note, Ishmael from Turkey demonstrates how he faced challenges communicating in English with Americans due to his accent. "I don't have any problem

communicating with anyone... [However], there are understanding problems because of my accent.”

Sara from Turkey also describes how at first when she arrived at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., her accent made her feel uncomfortable speaking in English with her classmates. However, as time went by, she felt that her classmates began to understand her better, so she felt more comfortable speaking with them in English.

I felt a little scared, embarrassed when I talk because I have accent. I know my English is not advanced like not my first language...But, everybody [classmates] tried to understand me. When they understand me, they ask questions. So after this, I felt comfortable.

Sara further explains how she can write in English easier than prepare oral presentations for class. “...But for my career, I can understand and I can write better than oral presentations for me.” Sara continues by conveying that oral class presentations became more comfortable for her after she became acquainted with her classmates and faculty members.

Oral presentations in class were difficult the first time I did them. After a while, I felt more comfortable doing oral presentations, especially if I get to know my professor or my classmates. Writing in English is better for me than oral communication. I can write in English without any concern about my thoughts or ideas.

Fadi from Iraq describes how he communicates orally in English well, yet may mispronounce a few words at times. “I speak English very well for it being a second language. Yes, of course, we are going to mispronounce some words.”

Malik from Kuwait explains how when he first attended classes in the U.S., he felt scared speaking in English due to his perception that others will ridicule his Arab accent.

I think that the first semester or the second semester I was kind of living in that fear stage that I'm afraid to talk. I'm afraid to express myself. I'm afraid that the people are going to make fun of my accent.

Rania from Saudi Arabia similarly explains how she felt nervous and uncomfortable preparing oral presentations in English in class. In addition, she took extra time to read and answer questions in English.

I feel so nervous and uncomfortable doing presentation in front of teacher and class because I have an accent and English is my second language. For this reason, I don't talk much in class discussions. The time is a big problem for me because I take time to read in my language and then take time to answer in English, so I didn't do well because of the time.

Sara, Rania, Fatima, and Malik feel more comfortable with oral communications in English when they attend English as a Second Language classes with other ESL international students. Sara from Turkey explains how oral presentations were uncomfortable for her when she first began attending courses at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. However, after she became acquainted with her professors and classmates, she felt more comfortable making oral presentations.

When I first came to the U.S., I took English as a Second Language courses before I began other courses at college. I did not know any English when I was in Turkey. Oral presentations in class were difficult the first time I did them. After a while, I felt more comfortable doing oral presentations, especially if I get to know my professor or my classmates.

Rania additionally describes how she felt comfortable making oral class presentations in front of her English as a second language class with other international students because she felt they were the same English level as her.

...We [international students in English as a Second Language course] made oral class presentations...because we are in the same level [English proficiency], and all of us are international, so...I was like nervous at the beginning...not like in American classes [mainstream content classes].

Rania further explains how she does not feel nervous speaking in the English as a Second Language classroom because all students are international students who are learning English as well. “And we [international students in English as a Second Language course] are all there the same, so you don’t like feel nervous like in an American academic class.” Rania offers further collegiate English as a second language experiences. “When I say some word in wrong way, professors [in English as a Second Language course] do not stop me in front of my classmates and say ‘What did you say?’. Professors try to understand what I am saying.”

Fatima similarly feels comfortable speaking in the English as a Second Language classroom at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. because all the students are also international students who understand she English is not her native language.

I feel comfortable making oral presentations in front of the class only in English as a second language class. I also like to participate in class discussions here because all students know I am an international student and understand that English is my second language.

Describing his classroom experiences in an English as a Second Language class at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., Malik expresses how he felt comfortable with other

international students like himself. “I felt that I’m not the only foreigner in the classroom. I mean there is a lot of other foreigners. And I think we are fine... Yes...they help us a lot in the class.”

Malik further describes how attending English as a Second Language course is essential for international students so they can communicate effectively in English.

But I think that we [international students] were serious learners. And that’s why you have to take some classes like English 101 or 102 in order just to communicate and...to read and write [in English] in the right way.

Fatima, Sara, Rania, Fadi, and Malik express what they would like their professors to understand about how they learn in English as a second language. Fatima from Saudi Arabia would like for faculty at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. to understand that international students face challenges learning in English because it is their second language and differs from how they learn in their first language. “...I want them [faculty] to know how it is too difficult for us because of the language and the way to study is different from what we learned before.” In regards to learning in English as a second language, Fatima offers that faculty can help international students by providing a website link that outlines course materials including lectures so students can read course information at their own pace. In addition, Fatima would like faculty to make her feel welcome to visit their office if she has any questions about a class. “Professors should send me a link or website about the material in class. Or they should ask me to come to their office to explain the lecture or assignments.”

Sara from Turkey feels faculty at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. try to be helpful to international students, yet they do not understand that international students feel they are alone because they face challenges socializing with American students. Thus, Sara would like faculty to help her feel more comfortable interacting with American students.

I think they [faculty] give us support...they are helpful. They can be helpful by [helping international students to] socialize. Sometimes our international students are alone because other students are already American and they know each other or they talk together. And they [faculty] should understand that sometimes being social is not easy.

Sara additionally would like faculty to offer more assignments so she can have the opportunity to improve her English in reading and writing. "I would like for professors to give us more homework because this helps me to improve my English because I am forced to learn more English by reading more books or reading materials."

Rania from Saudi Arabia describes how it is easier for her to read in English than to listen in English such as listening to class lectures. "Yeah I think it [reading in English] is more easier than listen [in English]. Read, I can see the words. But listen, ...I cannot listen very good." Rania also would like faculty to understand that although she does not speak English fluently, she does understand English. "I need teachers here to know that just because I am not perfect in English that doesn't mean I can't understand what there are doing."

Fadi from Iraq would like faculty to provide more scientific terms to improve his English language vocabulary as well as correct him any time he mispronounces a word. "Instructors can help me by improving my reading and using scientific references that related to my topic as well as correct my pronunciation." Fadi further expresses that faculty should put themselves in an international student's shoes by visualizing what it is like to learn in a second language in order to accommodate his or her language and learning needs in a more meaningful way. Fadi also would like universities to train faculty in ways to help international students learn more effectively.

Universities and professors here can help with better understanding [of] international

students ...by imagine themselves talking another language. Also, it is a good idea if the school helps instructors by involving them in programs to explain the ways to help us, especially [in] scientific departments.

In addition, Fadi felt shy when he first made oral presentations in classes at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. However, one faculty member was culturally responsive and advised Fadi how he can overcome his insecurities. Fadi adds that it takes extra time for international students to comprehend and respond to questions in class compared to native English speakers.

The most important help that I have got to improve my writing is from contacting the Writing Center at this university. In reality they support a nice people to explain the way that I have to use grammar in my writing. My first oral class presentation was so difficult because I felt shy, but the instructor advices helped me to make it easy. My common feeling is being shy. It needs more time, more than English native language students, to understand the questions and put the answers.

Likewise, Malik from Kuwait provides that he would like faculty to create close and supportive relationships with international students to help develop their self-confidence in class. “Instructors should get close to students so students feel confident to speak in English our second language in front of class and participate in class discussion.” Malik additionally would like faculty to provide audio-recordings of class lectures as well as make course information available to students online to review at their own pace. In addition, Malik would like access to services provided at the Writing Center; to meet with faculty during their office hours; or receive assistance from graduate assistants when faculty are not available.

Arab students want special attention by instructors or professors by offering more access to class materials such as audio-recordings of lecture materials or internet websites. Or

instructors can offer assistance to Arab students through their office hours. Students can also get help from graduate assistants or have access to a writing lab on campus.

Desegregated classrooms at the university in the U.S. The second pattern of meaning “Desegregated classrooms at the university in the U.S.” indicates that a number of Arab Muslim international students from this study had to adjust to desegregated classes at the university in the U.S. as they were use to attending segregated classes in the Arabian Gulf and Middle East. Fatima and Rania both from Saudi Arabia described issues with desegregated classrooms at their university in the U.S. Fatima describes how in Saudi Arabia all classes and schools are segregated where there is one school for males and one school for females. “In Saudi Arabia, the girls and boys are separate at the school. Boys go to one school and girls another. I never experienced going to the same school as men as here in the U.S.” Fatima additionally expresses how when she first attended classes at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., she felt “shy and scared” due to the presence of males in her classes, which she had never experienced. “When I first come to U.S., I am shy and scared because I am not use to be going to class with boys. I read about the U.S. on the internet in my home country.”

Rania similarly expresses how in Saudi Arabia there are separate universities for males and females. Rania also felt “shock” when she saw there were males in her classes as well as her professor was a male at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. Moreover, at first, Rania felt shy to speak with males in her classes in the U.S., but later adjusted to this new cultural and social environment.

In Saudi Arabia, our schools are separate. There are schools for just girls and there are schools for just boys. There are no together [desegregated] school. I remembered the first week when I saw my class [in U.S.] there are 4 boys with us!! I was in shock. Also our

teacher was a man. At the beginning, I couldn't work with them and I can't talk with my teacher but after that time I can handle it.

Rania additionally notes how she would like Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. to create segregated classes. "The colleges here can make the class separate [for] girls in [one] class and boys in other class." A look at theme four "*Challenges to Academic Development including English Language Use*" is complete. An analysis of this study's final theme "*Positive Perceptions of U.S. University's Curricular and Pedagogical Approaches and Practices*" is presented below.

Positive Perceptions of the U.S. University's Curricular and Pedagogical Approaches and Practices

The fourth and final theme which branched from the data is "*Positive Perceptions of U.S. University's Curricular and Pedagogical Approaches and Practices*" which exhibits Arab Muslim international students' positive perception of the U.S. higher education system as exemplifying high standards, high quality education, democratic practices by faculty, development of critical thinking; and use of advanced technology in the classroom and throughout campus. The final theme was constructed by the succeeding patterns of meanings from the data (1) positive educational experiences at university in U.S.; (2) democratic practices by faculty in the U.S.; (3) critical analysis development and application of knowledge learned in university classroom in U.S; (4) U.S. higher educational system exemplifies high standards and accountability; (5) U.S. higher educational system possesses advanced technology; (6) greater educational opportunities available for U.S. graduates; and (7) flexible curriculum and courses at university in U.S.

Positive educational experiences at university in U.S. The first pattern of meaning under this theme “positive educational experiences at university in U.S.” demonstrates how Arab Muslim international students perceive they have positive or good higher education experiences in the U.S. including feeling comfortable and liking the U.S. university. All participants from this study described positive educational experiences at their university in the U.S. Yaser from Morocco asserts that one of the characteristics of the U.S. higher education system which he admires is the good quality of education. “...the quality of the education...Because the quality of the education for me personally here is good.” Representing his doctoral classroom experiences in the U.S., Yaser establishes, “I think it is easier for me here [in U.S.] because as a graduate student, the classes are smaller so I have more interactions with my professors.”

Fatima from Saudi Arabia explains how she finds that higher education in the U.S. is better than in Saudi Arabia because she feels more comfortable studying in the U.S. Fatima further explains that she prefers to study in Saudi Arabia since everything is in her language Arabic. Yet, she admires the teaching methods which faculty follows at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. because it makes learning easier for her. “It [U.S. higher education] is better than in my country.” In addition, Fatima conveys, “I feel comfortable [in U.S. classroom].” Fatima further reflects, “I prefer in Saudi Arabia because of the language. But here [U.S.], I like the way ...[faculty] teach. It is different than in Saudi Arabia and easy.”

Sara from Turkey describes how she likes the higher education both in the U.S. and Turkey. Sara respects the education degree in the U.S., which is why she attends the Master’s of Education degree at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S.

I can say all are good [education in U.S. and Turkey]. I believe Turkey’s education is good

too like America...I am here [U.S.]...[because] I love here education. So I decided to take education. If I am not here, I can take it over there [Turkey] too.

Sara provides this response about her overall experience at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. “I have very good educational experiences here in the U.S. I studied my Masters degree in Education.”

Malik from Kuwait reveals how he likes attending the university in the U.S. In addition, when he completes his degree and returns to Kuwait, he would like to return to the U.S. to visit. Malik expresses, “It’s a great to be here [in U.S.]. And even if we [international students] decide to go back, United States is going to be one of our places to visit.”

In addition, Malik exposes how he feels he has nice experiences at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. Malik elaborates how he perceives he had a good opportunity to study in the U.S. He also finds the people in the U.S. act friendly towards him. Malik provides the following description of his experiences in the university in the U.S.

...it’s nice experience in this country [U.S.]. And I like the opportunity just to be here in United States. I’m surprised by the people how friendly they are. And I do enjoy my trip. I do enjoy my experience [in the U.S. university]. I do enjoy my degree here. And if I got the chance to do it again, yes I would get back here. I love it and I love my experience.

Praising the experience she obtained from her Master’s Degree program in Political Science at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., Nadia from Lebanon declares, “The experience I have earned from my career [Master’s Degree in Political Science from university in U.S.], has given me a real opportunity to understand how politics is shaping relationships between countries based on interests and how the world is affected by these relations.”

Ishmael from Turkey posts that he had such good experiences at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. for his Master's in Education Degree that he chose to continue his education at the same university to pursue his doctoral degree in education. "I have very good educational experiences studying at this university. In fact, next semester, I will begin the Interdisciplinary PhD degree in Education at this same university, which I am very excited."

Ishmael further provides how he feels welcome at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. "In the university here in the U.S...I always felt welcome by the university community, my peers, and my professors." Ishmael also expresses that overall his experiences at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. are great. "...And my main experience is great." Ishmael additionally offers, "My educational experience is great."

Fadi from Iraq describes his experiences attending classes at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. as positive due in part to faculty's understanding of international students' backgrounds. Fadi expresses, "I do not have any bad experience being as Muslim with all instructors. It is perfect with everything and most of them have a good understanding for international students." Fadi further describes how his friends both on campus and off help build his positive experiences at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. "It is not easy to describe my lovely...[feeling] during my study period at [Rolling Meadows University]. I enjoyed my new life and now I do have many friends at school as well as outside it."

Rania from Saudi Arabia shares how she feels comfortable attending classes at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. due in part to the friendliness and support from faculty. "Actually I do feel comfortable here. The teachers are very nice. Teachers are so good whenever I need to ask any question, they stop whatever they are doing and answer me. They are doing their best." Rania further expresses that she has good experiences which makes her happy at

Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. “I have good experiences here at my university [in U.S.]. I am happy here.”

Democratic practices by faculty in U.S. The second pattern of meaning “democratic practices by faculty in U.S.” highlights how Arab Muslim international students identify democratic ideals practiced by faculty in university classrooms in the U.S. that enable students to freely voice their opinions and personal experiences in class as well as freely talk with professors, while students feel their rights are protected by the university due in part to the recognition of measures of accountability. Ishmael, Nadia, Fadi, Fatima, Malik, and Sara share how they recognized democratic practices by faculty at their university in the U.S. Ishmael from Turkey explains how at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., he recognizes freedom of religion as Americans act tolerant towards diverse religions such as Christianity and Judaism. Ishmael declares that since Americans are understanding of Christian and Jewish beliefs, then they should also be understanding of Muslim beliefs.

...number one thing that I’ve learned when I come to the United States today is freedom of religion...people have understanding tolerance to Christians, Jewish, [so] I feel the same amount of tolerance should be given to Muslims...there is no difference between, as a human, between a Muslim or Jewish. And they [Muslims] should be also welcome [in the U.S.] and they [Muslims] should be able to practice here because of freedom of religion...That is in the amendments...freedom of expression.

Ishmael offers his perceptions of democratic ideals he notices at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion. “In the U.S. there are great opportunities, democracy, freedom of speech, and freedom to express your religious beliefs.”

Nadia from Lebanon asserts that in the U.S., employment is determined by democratic standards such as an individual's merit and qualifications; while in Lebanon, employment criteria focuses on one's religious or cultural identity.

In U.S., the people constitute a multinational people. They are from very different origins who live in one land. The U.S. constitution does not follow religion. It does not matter what your religious background is. American careers are chosen by their merit and qualifications, not their cultural or religious background as is the case in Lebanon. There is a high standard in choosing a person for a job based on his degree and skills, not his religious or cultural background.

Fadi from Iraq states that there are laws in the U.S. that protects people from discrimination at universities. As such, Fadi perceives that Americans treat culturally and religiously diverse people with justice and fairness, which does not occur in his country Iraq.

Americans law against discrimination is fantastic and nobody can do anything against whom they do not like. We are human and sometimes I can feel slight discrimination from some either as religious or cultural reasons, but it does not affect my study life. I like American people how they deal with people from different cultural or religious more than people in my home country.

Fadi also provides how the U.S. educational system possesses laws such as FERPA (i.e. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) that protect students' privacy rights. "It is very great system... A law that protects the students and their degrees FERPA. Protects students' grades, private information. No one can view this."

Fadi adds how he believes he was not hired by Rolling Meadows University for a campus job due to his ethnicity as well as age. Fadi further asserts that he informed Rolling Meadows

University that they discriminated against him and he is aware of anti-discrimination laws available to protect his rights.

It took me two years to receive my job here at...[the university]. They did not hire me. I saw many many many students get hired before me. I said this is discrimination. Due to age as well as ethnicity. I am an old man 54 years old. I said you hired other students before me. I know it is discrimination. Yet I know there are anti discrimination laws that are suppose to protect me. Then they hired me. I talked to ISAO advisor who helped me get my job. I told her I have a family, please help me. I must complete my degree by a certain time so that I can go back home on time.

Fadi also describes how at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. he feels human as he experiences freedom as well as perceives how faculty treat students such as himself with respect and provides support when needed.

First of all, I felt as human for the first time in my life [in the U.S.]. Also, I felt the freedom and being happy that I can do whatever I want without being...[afraid of being killed] or kidnapped. I like the teachers [in the U.S.] how they deal with student[s] and the...kind of help that got from everyone at school. For me, I know the magic words I NEED HELP.

Fatima from Saud Arabia describes how she feels comfortable disputing her grades with professors at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. "I can argue with the professor if I don't like my grade."

Malik also provides that at the university in the U.S., faculty encourage students to express their individual opinions or ideas through participation in classroom discussions which are democratic in nature.

The [U.S. higher education] system...builds your own self-confidence and they

[faculty] make you feel that [you can] express yourself, just say whatever you think that is going to be related to the specific topic and don't feel bad about it. Don't feel [a]shamed, they [faculty] will respect any ideas you are going to mention. And they do support you to participate in the classroom. They do support you to express yourself.

Malik further describes how faculty in the U.S. asks students to share their ideas or opinions with the class; encourage students to ask questions; and develop students' self-confidence.

Professors in the U.S. ask students, "What do you think about this?" When I first come to the U.S., I face troubles answering questions like this because I do not know how to think outside the professors' orders. In the U.S., I feel more comfortable participating in class discussions, asking questions to the professor, and thinking on my own, developing my own ideas. The result is I build my self-confidence and personality.

Sara from Turkey explains how at the university in the U.S., faculty invite students to share their personal experiences in class discussions or course assignments, which she perceives as freedom. Sara further describes how in Turkey, students are not allowed to try to solve problems outside the textbook or curricular materials.

In the U.S. [universities], students are encouraged to add their personal experiences or ideas to assignments or class discussions. This is freedom. In the U.S., professors teach students how to use what they learn from the classroom to be applied to their jobs outside the class. While in Turkey, we learn only how to solve problems from the textbooks, but we do not learn how to solve problems outside of the textbook or at work.

Sara further describes how at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., she feels free to express her religious practices including wearing her hijab (headscarf) without being questioned.

“There is also lots of freedom here in the U.S. including religious freedom. I can wear my scarf freely here without anyone telling me to take it off.”

Fatima recounts how in Saudi Arabia students are not allowed to contact faculty. Rather, faculty members’ roles are only to present lectures to the class. “...Because in Saudi Arabia it is hard to contact with professor. Just the professor gives us the lecture and you know you can not contact with the professor.”

Malik describes how in Kuwait and Egypt, students are the recipients of information delivered by faculty and are not permitted to ask faculty questions or to participate in class discussions. “Students in Kuwait or Egypt receive information from our professors. We are not allowed to question our professor. There is no class participation in Kuwait or Egypt.”

Ishmael enlightens how Muslim women who wear hijab (headscarf) in Turkey are discriminated against by not being allowed to attend k-12 school or higher education while wearing the headscarf. “In Turkey, Muslim women who wear the scarf are not allowed to attend school or college while wearing the scarf.”

All participants in this study except Rania identify that they are free to speak with faculty, ask for help from faculty, and make more personal interactions with faculty at universities in the U.S. Yaser from Morocco recognizes "personal interactions" between faculty and students in university classes in the U.S. “In the U.S., in my opinion, classes are much easier than in Morocco. I think there is more personal interaction here, from what I have seen than in Morocco or in France.”

Fatima from Saudi Arabia expresses how not only does she feel free to contact faculty in the U.S., she also feels free to form relationships with faculty as well. “But, I like the way of how to

contact with professors.” In addition, Fatima relates, “I am free to make a relationship with the professor.”

Ishmael from Turkey asserts that he can not discuss his concerns as a student with faculty in Turkey. Yet he feels comfortable discussing problems with professors in the U.S. “Of course, we don’t go and discuss issues with the teachers the same as here [U.S.]”

Sara from Turkey describes how faculty are not available to help students in Turkey the way faculty helps students in the U.S. “...help [from faculty in Turkey] is not like here [U.S.]”

Fadi from Iraq shares how faculty members in the U.S. are available to help international students develop their reading skills in English. “Professors help the [international] students to improve their readings.”

Malik from Kuwait expresses that faculty in the U.S. provide attention to students' learning by inviting students to participate in class discussions or activities.

...there is a lot of attention. I mean you feel that the instructor, if he or she feels that you are not participating in the class, at a certain point, they try to encourage you [international students] to get involved.

Malik further explains how he feels confident to ask faculty in the U.S. when he has questions or disagreements regarding lecture topics.

In America, ...if I feel that there is something I did not catch it or I’m behind, then I feel that I have the right to go to the instructor and say, “You know what, I do have a comment, one, two, three.”

Nadia from Lebanon conveys that she feels confident communicating with faculty at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. since faculty maintains relationships with her that reflects respect for her.

My communication with my instructors is based on mutual respect and understanding.

Moreover, increasing the level of communication between instructor and me can really be helpful and objective on the level of gaining more information about the material I am studying.

Fatima from Saudi Arabia describes how students in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to contact faculty as faculty members' roles and duties towards students extends no further than presenting lecture materials in class. "Because in Saudi Arabia it is hard to contact with professor. Just the professor gives us the lecture and you know you can not contact with the professor."

Likewise, Ishmael from Turkey states that there is a department in Turkey where students can bring complaints they have with faculty. However, the system is not effective the way it is in U.S. universities. "There is such a place in Turkey. Of course, we don't go and discuss issues with the teachers the same as here."

Sara from Turkey also describes how students can search for assistance from faculty. However, students do not receive the assistance the way they do in U.S. universities. "But I think...help [in Turkey] is not like here [in U.S.]."

Malik from Kuwait asserts that in universities in Egypt, students do not have relationships with faculty, nor are students free to contact faculty if they have questions or miss parts of the lecture materials because there are lines of communication between faculty and students are not available.

It's the relation between you and the instructor. The relation between you and the whole university...Do you have a clear discussion with your instructor? No. From Egypt, there is no second chance...I mean from my own experience, there is no way of communication between you and instructor.

Critical analysis development and application of knowledge learned in the U.S.

university classroom. The third pattern of meaning “Critical analysis development and application of knowledge learned in U.S. university classroom” outlines how Arab Muslim international students identify that they experienced learning that involves critical analysis and higher-order thinking as well as application of knowledge learned in the Rolling Meadows University classroom in the U.S. compared to traditional learning they experienced in their home countries in the Middle East. Nadia, Fatima, Fadi, and Malik all describe how they developed their critical analysis skills and were able to apply knowledge learned at their university to their lives outside the classroom. Nadia from Lebanon explains how in graduate school in the U.S., she feels professors hold high expectations for her which includes developing her critical analysis skills via writing assignments or class discussions. Nadia further states that she no longer must memorize facts for examinations as she is accustomed to doing at her previous university she attended in Lebanon.

Here in U.S., I study Master’s degree. As a graduate student, I must depend more on myself. I have to dig more for the information. There are higher expectations for better quality work from the student. We must do more in-depth analysis of assignments. Now we must have an analytical mind. NO more memorizing information for an exam. Now we must have a critical mind and demonstrate our opinion in writing to show why I demonstrate this idea.

Nadia adds the following statement.

In U.S. and under Master’s degree, we have more analytical discussions and we must explain more about the phenomenon and theory rather than simply our ideas. We must now explain and analyze why this happened. Not just to learn about this phenomenon. We

must understand why this happened.

Nadia further provides that she respects university she attends in the U.S. because she can learn practical knowledge which she can apply to her life outside the classroom.

I have a university in my country that offers the same degree. Actually, I prefer to come to the U.S.A. and continue my Master's degree here in order to [take] advantage of the experiences here in order to get more involved in research. [Research] is very highlighted here because they concentrate more on the practical side of the education and study.

Really I admire the system here, the educational system in U.S.A. And I feel that it will be a great opportunity for every person that seeks higher education and seeks to get more and more involved in his field.

Similarly, Fatima from Saudi Arabia describes how she can actually use the knowledge she gains from the university in the U.S. more than if she only memorized facts. "It is easier here and here it is focused on the way to study and focus on [how] to understand subjects... And we learn how you can use it [knowledge] here... Yeah. More than just memorize it [facts]."

Fadi from Iraq describes how faculty at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. provide learning support to him as well as guide him to finish his program of study. "I like all of my professors. Chemistry department is my co-discipline. All professors in this department help me support gaining knowledge as well as complete my program which is environmental pollution."

Malik from Kuwait explains how he is impressed by the efforts faculty at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. take to help him such as making "personal communications" via emails so he can meet his educational goals.

...I'm really surprised that we have some instructors at [Rolling Meadows University who] are willing to do personal communications from their university emails, to explain

something for you. And I do respect this. They help you to achieve your goals.

Fatima further describes how she memorized facts in the university in the Middle East and do not understand or apply that knowledge. Fatima posts that in Saudi Arabia faculty members' teaching methods require students only to memorize facts. "In Saudi Arabia, it is just memorize the studies."

U.S. higher educational system exemplifies high standards and accountability. The fourth pattern of meaning under theme four "U.S. higher educational system exemplifies high standards and accountability" looks at how Arab Muslim international students perceive the U.S. higher education system is one of the best in the world as they describe it as being highly developed, superior quality, and exemplifying high standards with accountability. Nadia, Yaser, Malik, Ishmael, Sara, and Fadi interpret the U.S. higher educational system as demonstrates high standards. Nadia from Lebanon explains how U.S. universities promote students to develop their critical analysis skills. "The U.S. educational system is very informative and based on research criteria that stimulate the critical thinking of the student." Nadia additionally explains how higher education in the U.S. is advanced; provides the opportunity for her to obtain a graduate degree; professors ask students to conduct research and utilize theories as learning methods; and enable students to actually apply theories they learned to their lives outside the classroom.

The U.S. educational system is very advanced and for me it constitutes an excellent opportunity to get a higher degree. I can see that the U.S. professors highlight the research part of studies and not just open reading and the theories. Now all students can study theories well and at the same time, we can go ahead and we can practice these theories.

Nadia further describes how she would also recommend other students from Lebanon to come to the U.S. to obtain higher education degrees; learn skills to conduct research; and apply knowledge gained to their professions.

Yeah, of course, I would recommend...I think that whoever wants to study and have a higher degree and they really want to be a good researcher, whether in social sciences or in a different field, or in engineering field, will find U.S.A. as a real place to practice these advantages.. I never stop to recommend any person that I feel he has this enthusiasm to continue his studies to be a real professional...

Yaser from Morocco describes how higher education in the U.S. maintains superior quality and how the infrastructure for the U.S. higher education system is one of the top in the world. "Because the quality of the education for me personally here [in U.S.] is good... The infrastructure here is good...Other than that, the U.S. is still one of the best [educational systems] in the world." Yaser further admires the intelligent faculty in the U.S."It is very great [educational] system, fantastic because everyone [universities] choose intelligent professors." Furthermore, Yaser offers the following statement regarding attending higher education in the U.S. "...to learn new things, and also study in the U.S. is a plus in terms of my education." Yaser also explains that in addition to the high quality, a feature that drew him to study in the U.S. is the high educational standards. "The reason why I came to the U.S. to study at the university is to see different cultures and because the U.S. has high quality and high standards for education."

Malik from Kuwait deems that his education from Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. is valuable. "And I think that you receive that valuable level of education here [in U.S.] compared to what I received in overseas [in Kuwait and Egypt]...The level of education here [in U.S.] is

way higher than what we receive over there.” Malik adds that Arabian Gulf governments send students to the U.S. to pursue their higher education degrees based on a relationship of trust between the U.S. and the sending Arabian Gulf country. In addition, according to Malik, it is understood in the Arabian Gulf that students who receive higher education degrees from the U.S. can be successful in obtaining employment in their home countries due to the high standards and advanced degrees offered at U.S. higher education institutions.

The governments of Arabian Gulf countries send us [Arab international students] to the U.S. or Canada to study because there is a trust relationship between the U.S. and our country. As far as career goals, it is almost a guarantee in the Arabian Gulf that if a student graduates with a degree from the U.S., he will get a job in an Arabian Gulf country. The education system in the U.S. has a lot of credibility, high standards, and accountability. I choose to study in the U.S. because the specialty of my field of study is advanced here. The labor industry in Arabian Gulf countries prefers U.S. or Canadian graduates.

Malik, who studied in Egypt, asserts that in Egyptian universities there are no departments for students to leave their grievances or complaints about professors as there is no implementation of liability or accountability of faculty members’ actions.

There is no office to talk to someone to file a complaint [in Egyptian universities]. Yes, there are departments to file complaints, but these departments is just they collect paper..again that’s how I say it in my first comment that’s the credibility and the liability...I mean really who you are going to complain to? There is no one who is going to listen to you

Ishmael from Turkey reveals how he admires the high standards implemented in higher education institutions in the U.S. “As an educator, I commend the U.S. higher education system

for its high standards, modern technology, and accountability of professors' actions inside the classroom.” Ishmael further establishes that the global labor market welcomes U.S. higher education graduates including his home country Turkey. “The employment sector around the world including Turkey welcomes degrees from the U.S.”

Malik explains how in the U.S. universities, there are standards and practices of credibility, accountability, and liability, which he perceives does not exist in universities in Egypt or Kuwait.

...it's a big difference from what I received as a learner in Egypt or in Kuwait. That, um, you feel that the education system here in the United States...either from the credibility perspective or the accountability or the liability...at any university here in the United States, especially here at this university,...there is no one at the top of the pyramid just like in most of the countries in the Middle East. Here, everyone [working at the university] is liable and everyone is responsible.

Fadi from Iraq shares that his motives for studying in the U.S. is to obtain “perfect knowledge” as well as to gain experience on how to improve the environment. “United States is the greatest country in the world and it is my ...dream to get the perfect knowledge ...and my goal to improve my experience to help our environment to be healthy.”

Nadia additionally identifies that U.S. higher education institutions are advanced in their research including faculty have strong research experience which they bring to their classrooms. Nadia from Lebanon highlights how Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. has a strong research program as well as supports students to develop their research skills. “The research center, the university in general, are developing themselves with a concentration on research and encouraging students to ...do more studies and research.”

Nadia adds that although universities in the Middle East are fine, universities in the U.S. research programs help graduate students obtain professional research skills which they can apply to their careers after they graduate.

In our countries [Middle East], we have good universities. But, here [in the U.S.] there is more concentration on the researchers. The more concentration in getting to the bottom of the materials... This will develop a good student... and he will be good in his career.

Nadia further describes how faculty members at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. are highly qualified professionals whose research experience includes publishing numerous books.

My university [in the U.S.] is very professional. The doctors, professors, are very highly qualified. Most of them have written more than four or five books and some of them have written maybe ten books. They have participated in the research papers and they have a very wide experience.

U.S. higher educational system possesses advanced technology. The fifth pattern of meaning “U.S. higher educational system possesses advanced technology” outlines how Arab Muslim international students view U.S. universities as using advanced technology in the classroom and in university facilities (i.e. library, computer lab, science lab). All participants from my study except Sara recognized that the U.S. higher education system holds advanced technology. Yaser from Morocco describes how when he first arrived at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., he noticed the developed infrastructures including advanced technology used on campus as well as the availability of computer labs for students, which did not exist at the university he attended in Morocco. “...I was impressed by the infrastructures of the universities [in the U.S.]... That is something that is not available in Morocco. Like the new

technology available here like the computer labs.” Yaser further provides the following. “I was surprised by the technology they have here [in the U.S.] on the college campus.”

Fadi from Iraq illustrates how Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. possesses advanced technology as well as the availability of computers including computer labs on campus for students. “It is very great system...Automatic system. Online high technology availability of computers [and] computer labs gives students great opportunity to complete their class requirements.” Fadi further evaluates how universities in the U.S. have “perfect technology” and communication systems. “... all schools here [in the U.S.] have perfect technology and using digital communication.”

Nadia from Lebanon provides how she has never attended online courses until she came to the U.S. “While in U.S. I am attending online classes as well. Universities are universities. However, the online education is a new experience to me.”

Correspondingly, Fatima from Saudi Arabia notices that technology is more prevalent in the U.S. than in her country. “Also in the U.S. you use more technology here.”

Ishmael from Turkey praises the U.S. higher education system due in part to its advanced technology. “As an educator, I commend the U.S. higher education system for its high standards, modern technology...”

Rania from Saudi Arabia offers that faculty at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. bring advanced technology into the classroom via activities that use the internet and PowerPoint. “They [faculty in the U.S.] are doing their best. Some of them bring activities from the internet and doing PowerPoint.”

Malik from Kuwait finds that the U.S. has the most “up-to-date” technology in the West. “The U.S. has the most up-to-date in technology in the Western hemisphere.”

Fatima and Fadi also recognized how technology used at higher education institutions in the Middle East is not as advanced as in U.S. universities. Fatima from Saudi Arabia observes how technology exists in universities in Saudi Arabia. Yet, technology is not as widespread as it is in U.S. universities. “We have technology in Saudi Arabia, but we do not use it as much as you do here [in U.S.] in the classroom.”

Fadi describes how some universities in Iraq have no technology at all, while others have technology, yet it is undeveloped.

Attending schools in Iraq and U.S. are completely different for many reasons...Second, all schools here [in U.S.] have perfect technology and use digital communication, but we [in Iraq] do not have any technology or we do have simple technology.

Greater educational opportunities available for U.S. graduates. The sixth pattern of meaning “Greater educational opportunities available for U.S. graduates” signifies how Arab Muslim international students perceive they will obtain greater educational opportunities if they graduate from higher education institutions in the U.S. rather than in their home countries in the Middle East which will lead to greater professional employment opportunities in their home countries. Nadia, Ishmael, Malik, and Sarah perceive greater educational opportunities are available in to U.S. graduates. Nadia from Lebanon asserts that studying in the U.S. presents opportunities for her to realize her dreams of obtaining an excellent graduate degree as well as strong educational experience. “It is really a good opportunity to be here in the educational profession in the U.S.A.” Nadia further advises, “...studying in U.S.A. university is a great opportunity for my ambition and I hope with the help of my doctors I will really fulfill my dream to have a Master’s Degree...with very important background that will constitute a solid ground

for my education.” Nadia additionally declares that she feels her graduate degree from the U.S. allows her to be a “well-qualified degree holder”.

Here [in U.S.] if you like to pursue more education, [Rolling Meadows University] will [offer] ...a good opportunity for you to go ahead and continue your education and get a good degree, a solid degree, not just any degree or just to be a degree holder. There is a great difference between being a degree holder or being a well-qualified degree holder.

Nadia additionally asserts that she is confident her graduate degree from Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. will open significant opportunities for her career.

I believe that this degree [Master’s Degree in Political Science] will offer me the greatest opportunity to expand my education in the area of international relations. Also, it will open the door for me to pursue a career at international organizations, government agencies, or research centers.

Ishmael from Turkey expresses how a degree from the U.S. is more recognized than a degree from Turkey. “What I can say is getting an education in United States is more accepted than an education in Turkey. So, let’s say if you are educated in the United States, you are more welcome [in labor market].”

Malik from Kuwait explains how he decided to study higher education in the U.S. rather than Europe because the U.S. provided the best opportunity for him to meet the labor market’s demand in Kuwait once he graduates.

It was an opportunity to get the chance to travel to the United States and to enroll in a higher education level...[It was] either to go to the United States or to go to Western Europe and I found out that the United States was going to be the best choice for me ...based on the market demand in my country [Kuwait].

Sara explains that although the higher education system in Turkey is great, she perceives there are greater educational opportunities in the U.S. “I wanted to study in the U.S. because although there is a great education system in Turkey, there are more educational opportunities in the U.S. and I think it is better to study higher education in the U.S. than in Turkey.”

Malik, Fadi, and Fatima further explain how they study higher education in U.S. because their governments in the Middle-East send them to the U.S. Malik from Kuwait demonstrates how a number of Arab countries provide financial support to students to study higher education in the U.S.

I mean if your government is willing to support you and to support your program here, I think everyone would prefer to go to United States...in Kuwait and other Arab countries, they [Arab governments] do promote their students [to study in U.S.]...governments they pick and choose the students who get to go over there [in U.S.] because not anyone...is going to get that golden opportunity to study in the United States.

Fadi from Iraq also describes how at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S., he has helped a number of students from Saudi Arabia who received scholarships from the Saudi Arabian government to study in the U.S. “...I also help many students from Saudi Arabia because they have a good opportunity to come here from a scholarship from their government.”

Fatima from Saudi Arabia describes how the Saudi Arabian government sent her to study her Master’s degree in Economics in the U.S. In fact, the Saudi government gave her the choice to study either in Canada or the U.S., in which case she chose the U.S. due to the warmer climate. “My government sent me here. They gave me two choices- Canada and here. I did not choose Canada because it is too cold.”

Yaser, Malik, and Fadi additionally perceive higher education in the U.S. costs more money than in their native countries causing some students to seek employment to pay for tuition in the U.S. because they are not eligible for U.S. federal loans due to immigration statuses of international students. Yaser from Morocco asserts that he does not like the high costs of tuition which U.S. universities charge international students. "...The one thing that I don't like would be the tuition here or the cost of education is very high... In my own opinion, that is one of the things that I don't like about the U.S. educational system." Yaser further describes the high tuition in the U.S. which students from his home country Morocco must pay. "...let's say they [Moroccan international students] are going to pay for the school [U.S. university tuition], it is very expensive."

Malik from Kuwait also describes how tuition in the U.S. is high, which prevents a number of international students from being able to study in the U.S. "As much as the education [in U.S. universities] itself is very costly and there are not that many people who will get the chance to be here."

Fadi from Iraq explains how a number of international students like himself must pay for their tuition. In order to pay tuition, they must work. However, according to the restrictions of the F-1 student visa, international students may not work off campus in the U.S. "...We [international students] are also working to pay for our degrees. Also we have only a small time period to complete our degrees, due to [our] immigration status. Americans have no immigration restrictions or they can take a loan. We can not take a loan, we must work to pay for our degrees." Discussing differences between living in the U.S. and Iraq, Fadi describes how tuition for higher education in Iraq is free. "Attending schools in Iraq and U.S are completely different

for many reasons. First of all, in my native country the study is free whereas here we have to pay to study.”

Flexible curriculum and courses at university in U.S. The seventh pattern of meaning “Flexible curriculum and courses at university in U.S” shows how Arab Muslim international students identify that the curriculum at the university in the U.S. is flexible as students’ describe perceptions of freedom to choose their own discipline of study including which courses they wish to attend. Yaser, Fadi, Ishmael, Nadia, and Malik all recognize how flexible the curriculum is at their university in the U.S. Yaser from Morocco offers that he respects the diversity of disciplines offered at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. “...And the variety of disciplines [in U.S. university] also...is good.” Yaser also notices how the higher education system in the U.S. offers a variety of courses for students to choose from as well as a way for students to “customize” their curriculum.

And they say also the way the [higher education] system is organized is not exactly the same. Here [in the U.S.] you [students] have a lot of choices of the courses you want to take and the credit hour system is not exactly the same as in Morocco... In the U.S., you can actually kind of customize what you want to do, what kind of courses you want to take.

On a similar note, Fadi from Iraq describes how he approves of how learning activities in U.S. higher education classrooms are not repetitive or standard. “The classes are not routine or the same every day.”

Ishmael from Turkey explains how it is easy to register for courses at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. “You can easily get registered in the classes here [in universities in the U.S.].

Nadia from Lebanon describes how she recommends for other Arab Muslims to study in the U.S. due to the flexibility and advanced higher education system. “I recommend other Arab Muslim students to come to U. S. to study. The reason is that the educational system here is flexible and more advanced.”

Malik from Kuwait shares how the curriculum at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S. is flexible as he can choose which courses his wishes to attend. “The curriculum and course subjects are more flexible in the U.S. I can choose what courses I want to take.”

Yaser and Malik additionally perceive the curriculum in the Middle East is not flexible as well as students are not free to choose their own courses to study. Yaser explains how in Morocco the higher education curriculum is modular where students are required to enroll in specific courses. As such, Yaser describes how the higher education curriculum in Morocco is less open than in the U.S. with little course selection availability in Morocco. “In Morocco, it is more modular. There are units. They are made in such a way that you [students] don’t have a lot of openness compared to the U.S... In Morocco, there are certain courses that you have to take and you don’t have that much options.”

Finally, Malik describes how the higher education curriculum in Kuwait and Egypt is “rigid”. “There is a more rigid curriculum and educational program of study in Kuwait or Egypt.” A review of each theme that emerged from the data sources for this study is complete. A closing discussion of chapter four is presented below.

Summary of Chapter Four

To summarize Chapter Four, each participant’s personal and academic profiles were provided as an introduction. Participants’ descriptions of their lived experiences matched constructs outlined in the theoretical framework shown in Chapter One as well as answered this

study's research questions. After careful analysis of the data, themes which surfaced from the data are (1) "U.S. university and classroom culture and environment is welcoming to diversity", which refers to how Arab Muslim international students perceive their university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S. is welcoming and respectful to diversity; (2) "Arab Muslim international students struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices while in the U.S.", which includes non-Muslims' desire to better understand Islamic religious beliefs and practices as well as university's lack of accommodations for religious practices for Muslims; (3) "Challenges with academic development including English language use", which signifies Arab Muslim international students recognize challenges with academic development including completing assignments in English; communicating in English for oral class discussions; and interacting with faculty and peers; and (4) "Positive perception of U.S. university's curricular and pedagogical approaches and practices", which refers to Arab Muslim international students' positive perception of the U.S. higher education system as high standards, high quality education, democratic practices by faculty, development of critical thinking skills, and use of advanced technology in the classroom and throughout campus. Upon reflection of the findings presented in Chapter Four, I find that this narrative inquiry was successful in capturing and describing the lived experiences of Arab Muslim international students as they attend a higher education institution in the U.S. through their true voices. As such, this study was able to illustrate how Arab Muslim international students describe their lived experiences in relation to their perspectives of U.S. higher education classroom's pedagogical and curricular practices; university classroom culture and learning experiences; and interactions with faculty. Next, Chapter Five will present a discussion of this study's findings as well as recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This narrative inquiry examined the lived experiences of eight Arab Muslim international students as they attend a higher education institution in the U.S including their descriptions of U.S. university classroom's pedagogical and curricular practices; classroom learning environment; and interactions with faculty. Chapter Four presented this study's findings that answered research questions from Chapter One: (1) How do they describe the university curriculum style in the U.S.?; (2) What are their experiences with academic development and competencies while attending courses in the U.S. higher education institution?; (3) How do they describe their relationships and interactions with faculty in the U.S.?; and (4) How do they describe the university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S.?

This study aimed to better understand the lived collegiate experiences of Arab Muslim international students as they pursue their higher education degrees in the U.S. Findings from this study revealed first, Arab Muslim international students consider the U.S. university and classroom culture and environment are welcoming and respectful to diversity. Second, Arab Muslim international students perceive a struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices at their university in the U.S. including awareness of their ethnic background and religious identity. Third, Arab Muslim international students recognize challenges with academic development in university classrooms including completion of assignments in English; communications in English for oral class discussions; and interactions with faculty and peers. Fourth, Arab Muslim international students identify positive perceptions of the U.S. higher

education's pedagogical and curricular approaches with its high standards, high quality education, democratic practices by faculty, development of critical analysis skills, and use of advanced technology. Conclusions drawn from this study aspires to build a dynamic cultural bridge between the Arab Muslim world and the U.S. through honest interpretations of the experiences of Arab Muslim students who have lived both in the U.S. and Arab region. This chapter will highlight how this narrative inquiry is actually "stories of experiences" of participants as well as descriptions and reflections of meanings of those experiences (Clandinin et al., 2006; Creswell, 2007). Based on the findings and discussion, this chapter offers recommendations that will be valuable for providing better services for Arab Muslim international students at universities in the U.S. This chapter concludes with a discussion of this study's limitations as well as recommendations for future research in this area of interest.

Discussion

This study employed a qualitative research design and methods of narrative inquiry to gain insight into the described experiences of Arab Muslim international students who attend a higher education institution in the U.S. Since the goal of this study was to use participants' personal narratives to disclose cultural, social, and curricular themes through the lens of their cultural, social, linguistic, and academic experiences, it is fitting to follow qualitative narrative inquiry approaches. This study focused on aspects of cultural and religious backgrounds; ethnic and religious identity; second language linguistics; academic development; university culture and environment; curricular experiences; pedagogy and learning classroom environment; and interactions with faculty and peers of eight participants in a university by examining their descriptions and reflections of meanings of their lived experiences. Narrative inquiry was further utilized as an instrument to enable Arab Muslim international students, who are not native

English speakers yet English proficient, to share their lived experiences by enabling their voices to be communicated, recognized, and understood by U.S. universities as well as society.

Chapter Four's findings reveal how Arab Muslim international students conveyed the U.S. university and classroom culture and environment is welcoming to diversity; a struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices while in the U.S; challenges with academic development including English language use and interactions with faculty; and positive perceptions of U.S. university's curricular and pedagogical approaches and practices.

Overall, this study revealed evidence of positive experiences with university in the U.S. by Arab Muslim international students. Such sentiment was conveyed by all eight participants of this study regardless of gender, years of attending college in U.S., nationality background, or English language development level. This study highlights how the U.S. university and classroom environment including faculty and peers act welcoming and respectful towards Arab Muslim international students' diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. Reasons for such sentiment among this study's participants include non-Muslims' curiosity towards diversity as demonstrated by questions asked to Arab Muslim international students about their cultural and religious beliefs and backgrounds; acts of friendliness and kindness by non-Muslims towards Muslim participants; and presence of an Arab Muslim ethnic religious community on campus where participants socialize and bond with other Muslims. Thus, this study's findings differs from existing research which reveals that international students including Arab Muslim international students experience negative educational experiences including linguistic difficulties; cultural adjustment challenges; feelings of alienation; perceived experiences of discrimination and prejudice; and difficulties developing social relationships (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Read, 2008; Sharma, 2008; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009). Findings from this

study additionally fluctuate from previous studies which suggest Arab Muslim international students experience insensitive discrimination and negative interactions with faculty (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Read, 2008; Sharma, 2008; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009).

A further finding identified by this study is that Arab Muslim international students struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices while in the U.S. which includes non-Muslims' desire to better understand Islamic religious beliefs and practices as well as U.S. university's lack of accommodations for religious practices of Muslims. Thus, although this study reveals non-Muslims' lack of awareness of Islam, this study's findings varies from existing research on Arab Muslim international students which propose that non-Muslims at universities display inaccurate, distorted, or biased information about Muslims and Islam (Abukhattala, 2004; Britto, 2008). Arab Muslim international female students from this study additionally shared how non-Muslims at Rolling Meadows University reacted with stares of shock at times, yet demonstrate respect towards their Islamic dress of hijab or headscarf. Such findings from this study's female participants diverge from research which demonstrates how non-Muslims show inaccurate information about why Muslim women wear hijab or headscarf (McDermott-Levy, 2011). All participants from this study regardless of gender, years of living in U.S., or nationality backgrounds expressed how they wish Rolling Meadows University better understood their Islamic cultural and religious beliefs and practices. Gender refers to socially constructed appropriate roles, characteristics, actions, and behaviors for men and women within a particular society (Schaefer, 2002). The role of females in Saudi Arabian society and educational institutions in which this study's two female participants from Saudi Arabia are accustomed to is that females attend separate schools than males. Gender roles in U.S. society differ considerably from Saudi Arabia as males and females attend the same schools and classrooms in the U.S.

Notice how male participants of this study make no reference to difference in societal gender roles from the Middle East and U.S. nor segregated classrooms. Thus, issues related to gender societal roles tend to be recognized more by Arab Muslim females than by Arab Muslim males. Findings from this study additionally correlate with research on international students in the U.S. which reports students felt their university did not fully understand their culture (Sherry, et al., 2009).

Findings from this study further reveal how Arab Muslim international students recognize challenges with academic development in English. Factors that contribute to students' academic difficulties include completion of assignments in English; communications in English for oral class discussions or oral class presentations; and interactions with faculty and peers. Furthermore, Arab Muslim international students from this study convey how they would like faculty to become more aware of students' English language barriers. Thus, this study's findings confirm previous research which exhibits how English language proficiency is a major challenge to academic development and classroom oral language communications of international students (Andrade, 2006; Collinridge, 1999; Mostafa, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009; Wisker, 2005; Yeh & Inos, 2000). However, participants of this study offered suggestions of how faculty and universities can help better meet their academic and linguistic needs. Participant recommendations from this study are provided in the recommendation section.

This study additionally discloses how Arab Muslim international students hold positive perceptions of U.S. higher education's pedagogical and curricular approaches and practices. According to participant responses, reasons they hold positive perception of higher education in the U.S. is that the U.S. maintains high standard; demonstrates high quality education; instills democratic practices within classrooms by faculty including inviting students to share their ideas

in class discussions; strives to develop students' critical analysis skills; and utilizes advanced technology within classroom learning activities and campus facilities such as libraries. As such, findings from this study disputes research which emphasize how differences in educational system, academic environment, learning style, and teaching methods can make learning challenging and stressful for international students (Abukhatta, 2004; Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Cadman, 2000; Mostafa, 2006; Shana'a, 1979). Upon reflection of the findings of this study, I offer the following recommendations for U.S. higher education institutions in regards to addressing and meeting international students' unique collegiate needs.

Recommendations to Higher Education Institutions in U.S. and Faculty

Aligned with findings from this study, Arab Muslim international students would like university faculty and staff to ask Muslim students to share their cultural tradition and religious beliefs with the class via class discussions or presentations in order for non-Muslims to better understand the true characteristics and practices of Islam and Muslims. Arab Muslim students would additionally like universities to act more culturally responsive towards Muslim students' religious practices and obligations by providing a location for Muslim students to pray on campus such as an unattended classroom since Muslims are obligated to pray five times each day. The above recommendations can assist university administration, faculty, and staff to better serve Arab Muslim international students' diverse needs as well as improve the collegiate experiences of all Muslim university students.

Based on participant responses of this study, Arab Muslim international students would like faculty to recognize that English is not Arab Muslim international students' first language. As such, international students are English as a second language users who learn in a different way and pace than native English speakers and require more time as they must translate all words

from Arabic into English. In addition, Arab Muslim international students would like faculty to understand that international students face difficulties with language communication in English as Americans may not understand international students' accents as they try to communicate as well as international students face troubles understanding Americans' native English accents. Moreover, Arab Muslim international students would like faculty to be aware of challenges they face in regards to academic development including completion of assignments in English; communications in English for oral class discussions; and interactions with faculty and peers.

The following recommendations may assist faculty in the U.S. to help English as a second language students better understand English used in higher education classroom instructional practices. Findings from this study reveal how Arab Muslim international students would like faculty to act more culturally responsive to their unique learning needs as English as a second language users by demonstrating patience, understanding, and support when international students struggle with participation in oral class discussions; display lack of self-confidence when delivering oral class presentations; demonstrate worries when submitting class assignments or papers in written English form including those that require critical analysis or higher order thinking; or appear nervous when assigned intense reading assignments. In other words, faculty's display of support, understanding, patience, and concern towards international students who are non-native English speakers such as Arab Muslims can help build students' academic self-efficacy as well as develop their social self-confidence when using English.

Second, international students would also like faculty to provide links to websites regarding new materials or contents taught in classes in efforts to facilitate learning. Third, international students would like faculty to invite them to visit their offices where they can explain more details regarding new content or concepts taught in classes. Fourth, international students would

like faculty to provide audio-recordings or videotaped recordings of class lectures which can be made available online for students to view at anytime. Fifth, international students would like faculty to inform them about services offered by their university such as the Writing Center, which can assist international students to increase their writing abilities. Sixth, international students would like faculty to be aware that many international students feel it is easier to read in English than to listen or speak. As such, international students would like faculty to provide written hand-outs of course lectures as an additional study resource for students. This strategy can help native English speaking students' learning as well. Seventh, international students would like faculty to convey how they trust in international students' academic capabilities and hold high academic expectations of them. Eighth, international students would like faculty to develop relationship with them in order to develop international students' self confidence as English as a second language users as well as to encourage students to feel more comfortable participating in class discussions or making oral class presentations. Finally, faculty can creatively link students' prior knowledge and experiences to classroom learning activities including class discussions, written paper assignments, or oral class presentations. It should be noted that many of the above recommendations offered by this study findings align with multicultural education's philosophy regarding cultural responsive pedagogy and culturally diverse students (Oakes & Lipton, 2007; Manning & Baruth, 2009). This completes an outline of this study's recommendations to U.S. higher education institutions including faculty in relation to Arab Muslim international students' educational experiences. Next, I will review a summary of limitations of my study.

Limitations

Maxwell (2005) suggests that researchers remain cautious of potential reactivity and reflexivity that may emerge during the research process. Reactivity refers to the researcher's influence over the setting or participants studied. Following Maxwell (2005) suggestions, I strived to understand how my influence could influence the setting and participants as well as validity of conclusions I drew from this study's data. More specifically, I made every effort to continuously recognize throughout the research process how my own influences, privileges, and potential power over the research setting and participants could influence this study. Furthermore, I asked participants to actively participate in the research process by reading, correcting, and verifying all narratives and follow up interviews transcripts to ensure that my influence did not overpower participants' true responses regarding their descriptions of collegiate experiences.

Reflexivity refers to how the researcher, "...acknowledges the impact of the writing on the researcher, on the participants, and on the reader" (Creswell, 2007, p. 179). Maxwell (2005) further explains how with qualitative interviews, the interviewer may have influence over the interview responses. In accordance with Maxwell (2005) I made every effort to design interview questions which were not leading in efforts to eliminate my influence as interviewer over the interview. Following Creswell (2007), I remained cautious of how the write up of the research could be perceived by this study's participants. For instance, I strived to avoid including any words or tones that could make this study's participants feel marginalized, offended, or silenced by writings from this study. Finally, I carefully reviewed all findings and conclusions of this study to ensure that all participants' true voices were heard so no statements or thoughts were omitted or silenced. However, it is possible participants held further ideas in which I did not

recognize which could have been shared within this study's findings and final write up.

Coverage of the limitations of this study is complete. At this time, recommendations for future research are offered concerning Arab Muslim international students' collegiate experiences in the U.S.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on analysis of this study's narrative and interview transcript documents, areas of interest connected to the experiences of Arab Muslim international students attending a higher education institution in the U.S. are reasonable. The data analyzed demonstrate the need for U.S. faculty to address concerns related to supporting the social, linguistic, and academic needs of international students including Arab Muslims in efforts to enhance their educational experiences in the U.S. Allied with findings of this study, the first recommendation is for further research on U.S. higher education's challenges in providing quality education for culturally and linguistically diverse international students. Finally, future research may be conducted to better understand issues related to ethnic, cultural, and religious identities of international students; learning needs of English-language learners; faculty-international student relationships; and learning outcomes of culturally responsive teaching practices at the higher education level. Recommendations for future research have been offered. This study's conclusions are presented below.

Conclusions

It is essential that U.S. universities increase awareness of the growing international student population in terms of lived college experiences in effort to better meet students' educational and social needs. Determined to better understand the lives of international students in the U.S., this narrative inquiry captured and described the lived experiences of eight Arab Muslim international students as they attend a higher education institution in the U.S. including their

descriptions of U.S. higher education's pedagogical and curricular practices; classroom learning experiences and environment; and interactions with faculty. Research questions that guided this study are: (1) How do they describe the university curriculum style in the U.S.?; (2) What are their experiences with academic development and competencies while attending courses in the U.S. higher education institution?; (3) How do they describe their relationships and interactions with faculty in the U.S.?; and (4) How do they describe the university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S.?

Findings from this study revealed how Arab Muslim international students consider universities in the U.S. are welcoming and respectful towards their diversity. However, at the same time, Arab Muslim international students perceive a struggle with their diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious practices while in the U.S. As such, international student would like faculty to possess a better understanding of their diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. This can be accomplished by asking diverse students to share their cultural beliefs and practices in classroom learning activities and class discussions. Arab Muslim international students from this study further recognize challenges with academic development including completion of assignments in English; communications in English for oral class discussions; and interactions with faculty and peers. Implications of this study's findings further provide how international students would like faculty to recognize and respond appropriately to students' strengths and weaknesses as well as diverse learning styles and interests. In addition, international students would like faculty to demonstrate high expectations and belief in their academic and linguistic competencies.

Research has explored cultural adjustment experiences of international students in the U.S. due to differences in culture, language, and educational systems (Hazen & Alberts, 2006;

Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Rocha-Tracy, 2009; Sharma, 2008) in addition to the linguistic, curricular, and cultural experiences of Arab Muslim international students (Abukhattala, 2004; Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006; Britto, 2008; Mostafa, 2006; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Shammass, 2007). However, studies concerning the lived experiences of Arab Muslim international students at a U.S. higher education institution in relation to their descriptions of the U.S. university curriculum style; academic development and competencies while attending courses in the U.S.; descriptions of their relationships and interactions with faculty in the U.S.; and descriptions of the university and classroom culture and environment in the U.S. are slim. Based on this insight, it is essential to better understand the true lived experiences of Arab Muslim international students while attending a U.S. higher education institution in efforts to better meet their needs as students living in foreign countries. Since there was an estimated 42,543 international students from the Middle East attending U.S. higher education institutions during the 2010-2011 academic year, it is important that universities improve their awareness of who they are hosting in terms of personal, social, and academic experiences at universities.

Conclusions presented in this study, which are derived from Arab Muslim international students' descriptions of their collegiate experiences, can facilitate U.S. universities and faculty to recognize and respond to issues and challenges faced by English as a second language users in higher education. This study's conclusions can further enable U.S. universities to meet the distinctive needs of all Muslim higher education students in the U.S. Finally, this study aspires to develop a cultural understanding between Muslim higher education students and U.S. universities and faculty.

APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

Dear Arab Muslim international students,

Greetings. As-salam-o-alaikum. My name is Michelle Abualkhair. I am a doctoral student at the School of Education here at UMKC. I would like to ask for your assistance with this dissertation research study *Arab Muslim International Students' Lived Experiences in a U.S. Higher Education Institution*. The purpose of this study is to describe the lived experiences of Arab Muslim international students as they attend a higher education institution in the U.S.

I myself am a Muslim higher education student living within a Western society. However, I was born in America and am a convert to Islam. As such, I do not know what it is like to travel to a foreign country to study within a different culture and language. A number of studies are available regarding experiences of Arab Muslim students in Western countries. However, there are few, if any, studies that explore Arab Muslim international students' experiences regarding culture, identity, educational perspectives, and university classroom learning as in my study. The genuine voices of Arab Muslim international students are needed to be heard by the higher education community and U.S. society. I would be appreciative if you would share your experiences while attending UMKC. Your true stories will be valuable to universities in the U.S., the Arab Muslim community, and educators of international students and English as second language learners. I guarantee that all of your personal identification will be omitted in the dissertation write up.

You are kindly invited to participate in my dissertation study if you are (a) pursuing either an undergraduate or graduate degree at UMKC; (b) registered as an international student at UMKC; (c) come from a country whose official language includes Arabic; (d) a native Arabic speaker; (e) proficient in the English language in both oral and written forms; and (f) completed at least two semesters at UMKC. As a participant of my study, you will be asked to answer in written form some short questions about your in-class and out-of-class experiences as an Arab Muslim international student at UMKC. You will be asked to complete your written responses and turn them into me in person at UMKC by July 1st, 2012. Once you complete the written answers, I will conduct a follow-up interview with you via telephone for one hour to clarify some questions.

There will be no recognized physical risks for participants of this study. There may be incidences of emotional excitement as you remember your lived experiences. All of your information obtained for this study including your name and the stories you share will be kept highly confidential and deleted one year after completion of this study. Furthermore, your name will not be identified on any part of this dissertation. You are welcome to view the dissertation which will be available at UMKC's library database.

Please respond to my email at abualkhairm@umkc.edu if you are willing to participate in this study. Please contact me at 816-347-2699 if you have any further questions. You may also contact my faculty advisor Dr. Omiunota Ukpokodu at ukpokodun@umkc.edu or 816-235-2469. Thank you, Michelle Abualkhair, PhD, ABD (IPhD UMKC student Education)

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY FOR SAMPLING

PART A: Please complete the following information. Please note that all information you provide will be kept highly confidential and will be deleted if you do not participate in this study. If you decide to leave the study, all information you provided will be deleted immediately.

All of the information you complete and share in this study will be kept confidential. If you choose to participate in this study, you will not be asked to use your name in any of the measures (i.e. narrative stories and follow-up individual interviews). In addition, your identity will not be provided on any measures (i.e. narrative stories and follow-up interviews, audiotapes, or their transcriptions).

After screening, all information on this form will be *saved and maintained in both computer files with password security to guarantee extra security as well as on two portable flash drives with password security that are stored in a file cabinet with locks located in my office for seven years. No one will have access to those passwords or keys except for myself.* Seven years after completion of the study, all data including this form, tapes, and transcripts will be destroyed.

Please note that if you fail the screening and do not participate in this study or if you decide to leave the study before completion of the study, all information you provided will be deleted and destroyed immediately.

Are you English proficient in written form: ____ Yes ____ No

Are you English proficient in oral form: ____ Yes ____ No

Are you registered as an international student at UMKC? ____ Yes ____ No

Is your native country of origin an Arab nation? ____ Yes ____ No

Is your native language spoken Arabic? ____ Yes ____ No

Is your religious affiliation Muslim? ____ Yes ____ No

Have you completed at least one semester at this university? ____ Yes ____ No

***** Please note, if you answered “No” to any of the above questions, please stop and do not complete the remainder of this form. Thank you.**

***** Please note, if you answered “Yes” to all three of the above questions, please complete the remainder of this form. Thank you.**

Are you a Graduate student? ____ Yes ____ No

Are you an Undergraduate student? ____ Yes ____ No

Name:

Gender:

Degree you are seeking:

Major or discipline of study:

Department and School at UMKC:

PART B: I would like to ask you a written sample question to help me determine whether you are a likely candidate to participate in this study. Thank you.

Please answer the following question.

- 1.) Why did you choose to study at UMKC in the U.S.?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FROM SSIRB

Consent for Participation in a Research Study

Title of Research: Arab Muslim International Students' Lived Experiences in a U.S. Higher Education Institution

Investigator: Michelle Abualkhair, IPhD candidate,
Department of Curriculum & Instructional Leadership, UMKC

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a dissertation research study.

Who will Participate

Eight Arab Muslim international students who have completed at least two semesters at UMKC and are willing to share his or her college experience stories with the researcher in this dissertation research study.

Purpose

The purpose of this proposed study is to describe the lived experiences of four male and four female Arab Muslim international students as they attend a higher education institution in the United States.

Description of Procedures

If you are willing to participate in this study, you will be asked to write, at your convenience, short stories of your:

- descriptions of U.S. higher education;
- descriptions of your identities in the U.S. university; and
- experiences with the curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions with faculty in higher education classroom in the U.S.

After completion of your short story narratives, you will participate in one or two follow-up interviews. Each interview will last about one hour long. The time and dates of these interviews will be based on your convenience.

The individual follow-up telephone interview, with your permission, will be audiotape recorded. The audiotapes will be transcribed (i.e. put in writing), to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide to the researcher.

All narratives and audiotapes will be stored in locked files before and after being transcribed. All tapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my office for seven years. I will be the only person who will have access to the file cabinet key. Seven years after completion of the study, all tapes and transcripts will be destroyed.

The transcriptions and the findings will include a description of the common experiences Arab Muslim international students experience attending a higher education institution in the U.S. The findings may be used in professional presentations such as conferences or be published in professional journals; however, your identity will not be shared.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary at all times. You may choose to not participate or to withdraw your participation at any time. Deciding not to participate or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

If you decide to leave the study, the information you have already provided will be deleted immediately from the researcher's computer or be kept for study with your written consent. Please inform the researcher whenever you choose to withdraw from the study and indicate whether you allow the researcher to keep information you have already provided.

Compensation

You will receive a \$35.00 gift certificate, upon your completion of the study, to a restaurant located in this city to compensate for your time and participation.

Risks and Inconveniences

Although there are no anticipated risks for participating in this study, it is possible that you could experience emotional excitements as you remember stories of your college experiences. You may refuse to complete the narrative stories; refuse to answer any questions; or stop participating in the study at any time.

Benefits

A potential benefit of participating in this dissertation research study for you could be having an opportunity to describe your experiences of attending a higher education institution in the U.S. with others who have shared similar experiences. An additional benefit is for you to have the opportunity to publicize your voice in regards to how you interpret your collegiate experiences in the U.S. Your stories about your collegiate experiences can assist higher education institutions to better understand the lives of Arab Muslim international students who have shared similar experiences as they attend universities in the United States.

Confidentiality

All of the information you complete and share in this study will be kept confidential. Your identity will not be provided on any measures (i.e. narrative stories and follow-up in person or telephone interviews), audiotapes, or transcriptions.

The individual follow-up phone interview sessions will be audio-tape recorded. The audiotapes will be transcribed (i.e. put into writing), to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide to the researcher. You may stop the taping or ask that the tape be erased and it will be done. No identifying information will be recorded on the tape. In addition, no one's name will be asked during the narrative stories and follow-up in person or telephone interviews.

In addition, all findings in any written reports or publications which result from this research study will be reported with no identifying information. It is, however, useful to use direct quotes to more clearly capture the meanings in reporting the findings from this type of study. However, you will be asked at the end of the follow-up interviews if there is anything that you said which you do not want included as a quote and the researcher will ensure these words are not used.

All data and transcripts will be ***saved and maintained in both computer files with password security to guarantee extra security as well as on two portable flash drives with password security that are stored in a file cabinet with locks located in my office for seven years. No one will have access to those passwords or keys except for myself.*** Seven years after completion of the study, all tapes and transcripts will be destroyed.

While every effort will be made to keep confidential all of the information you complete and share, it cannot be absolutely guaranteed. Individuals from the university's Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies), Research Protections Program, and Federal regulatory agencies may look at records related to this study for quality improvement and regulatory functions. There will however be no names used in any written reports or publications which result from this dissertation research study.

It should be noted that the information obtained in this study may be presented at professional conferences or published journals; however, you will not be identified in any way.

In Case of Injury

The university appreciates the participation of people who help it carry out its function of developing knowledge through research. If you have any questions about the study that you are participating in you are encouraged to call **Michelle Abualkhair**, the investigator, at **816-347-2699**.

Questions

You have been encouraged to ask questions about the study. If you have any more questions about this study at any time, you may contact my faculty advisor Dr. Omiunota Ukpokodu at Suite 309, Education Building, UMKC, 615 E. 52nd Street, Kansas City, MO 64110 or you may e-mail ukpokodun@umkc.edu or call her at 816-235-2469 and she will be happy to answer any of your questions. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please

contact the IRB Administrator of UMKC's Social Science Institutional Review Board at 816-235-5927.

Authorization

The investigator has given you information about the study. You have been told what will happen and what you will have to do as well as how long the study will take. You were told about risks you may experience by participating in this research study. By signing below, you agree to take part in this study as a research participant.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. The researcher thanks you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in this study.

Signature (Volunteer Subject) **Date**

Signature (Authorized Consenting Party) **Date**

Relationship of Authorized Consenting Party to Subject **Date**

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent **Date**

APPENDIX D

NARRATIVE OF LIVED EXPERIENCES

Narrative Journal Question Prompts. Journal prompts of open-ended questions for **narrative journals** will include the following.

Please write a narrative about both your in-class and out-of-class experiences in the U.S.

1. Why did you choose to study at Rolling Meadows University in the U.S.?
2. How would you describe your experiences as an Arab Muslim international student attending classes at this university?
3. How would you describe your overall experience studying at the university?
4. How would you describe your classroom experiences at this university?
5. Given your language background, what has been your experience studying in English?
6. Please share any additional experiences or thoughts at this time.

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

First, **elaboration probe questions** will be made to ask participants to elaborate on specific areas of their narrative stories.

- d.) Could you elaborate on this response?
- e.) Will you tell me more about this response?
- f.) Thank you. Could you provide some more details?

Second, **clarification probe questions** will be asked to clarify areas that are ambiguous, needs further information, or requires a deeper context to their narrative stories.

- d.) In this story, you mentioned this activity or experience was _____. Could you clarify what _____ means?
- e.) I do not quite understand what you are trying to describe. Could you be more specific or provide more details?
- f.) In order to better understand what you are trying to say, could you say more about this (activity or experience)?

Third, **contrast probe questions** which will identify boundaries to participants' stories or narratives.

- c.) Could you describe how X compares to Y?
- d.) Could you describe how this (experience, activity, feeling) compares to another (experience, activity, feeling)?

APPENDIX F
SIRB APPROVAL LETTER



May 17, 2012

Omiunota Ukpokodu, Ph.D.
UMKC - School of Education
309 Education
Kansas City, MO 64130

Determination Date: 05/17/2012
Review Type: Exempt #2

RE: SSIRB Protocol #: SS12-88X, entitled: "Arab Muslim International Students' Lived Experiences in a U.S. Higher Education Institution"

Dear Dr. Ukpokodu,

The above referenced study was reviewed and determined to be exempt in accordance with the Federal Regulations 45 CFR Part 46(b)(2) as follows: "Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation."

You are required to submit an Exempt Report Form biennial report on or before 05/16/2014 to prevent withdrawal of the exempt determination for your study. If your project is completed before this date, a Final Exempt Report Form is required.

Please contact the administrative office of the SSIRB (email: umkcssirb@umkc.edu; phone: 816-235-5927) if you have questions.

Thank you,

SSIRB Administrative Office

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY
5100 Rockhill Road • Kansas City, Missouri 64110-2499 • 816 235-5669 • Fax: 816 235-5602
Location: 5319 Rockhill Road • www.umkc.edu/research
an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution

APPENDIX G

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Anti-immigrant sentiment- Opposition to immigration including negative perceptions of immigrants and ethnic minorities (Schaefer, 2002).

Arab- An individual whose familial or ancestral ties with one of the Arab nation states of the Middle East, Arabian Gulf, and parts of Africa (Britto, 2008, p. 854) and whose native or ancestral language includes Arabic (Watt & Cachia, 2010).

Arab Muslim Identity- An “Arab” generally denotes that he or she holds familial or ancestral ties from one of the Arab nation states that include the regions of Middle East, Arabian Gulf, and parts of Africa. An Arab Muslim identity recognizes both the Arab pan-ethnic political, social, and cultural dimensions of identity as well as the religious feature of Arab Muslims’ identities (Britto, 2008).

Arab Muslim International Students- Arab Muslim higher education students who hold an F1 visa and are seeking a higher education degree at a U.S. higher education institution (Institute of International Education- IIE, 2009).

Colorblind Racism- Bonilla-Silva provides that racism today may not be explicit, yet it continues to exist though it is inclined to be institutional by specific sects within the U.S. society. Thus, certain individuals or groups appear colorblind to racial diversity asserting racism no longer exists in the U.S. At the same time, they continue to practice concealed racism (Bonnilla-Silva, 2006).

Community- A physical unit of social organization that provides individuals with a sense of belonging according to a common identity or shared residential location (Schaefer, 2002).

Critical Race Theory- Originated during the 1970s as minority researchers were ignored in critical legal education. This study follows Ladson-Billings' and Tate's (1995) use of critical race theory to study how social structures and cultural influences shape education of racial minority students and to better understand educational inequities.

Culture- Consists of an individual's beliefs, values, language, religion, modes of social relationships, perceptions, behaviors, and ideas (Manning & Baruth, 2009).

Discrimination- To deny opportunities or equal rights to particular individuals or groups based on prejudicial, biased, or illogical reasons (Schaefer, 2002).

Diversity- differences in race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, gender, religious background, nationality, and political beliefs (Schaefer, 2002).

Ethnic group- "a community of people within a larger society that is socially distinguished or set apart, by others or by itself, such as religion, language, a shared history, and tradition" (Bennett, 2004, p. 862).

Ethnic identity- The level of a sense of connection to a particular racial, cultural, or ancestral ethnic group as one is undergoing development. One's ethnic identity consists of cultural or racial characteristics, beliefs, values, attitudes, worldviews, biological attributes, self-identification, and a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group (Bennett, 2004).

Ethnocentrism- To believe an individual's own culture and pattern of living represents the norm for society or is superior to others' culture or way of living (Schaefer, 2002).

Gender- socially constructed appropriate roles, characteristics, actions, and behaviors for men and women within a particular society (Schaefer, 2002).

Hijab- The hijab or head covering is a religious symbol and expression of cultural values & a Muslim woman's identity. Islamic Shariah law requires for all adult Muslim women to cover their hair (Madani, 1995).

Institutionalized discrimination- To deny opportunities or equal rights to particular individuals or groups as an outcome of traditional processes of a society (Schaefer, 2002).

International students- Non-U.S. higher education students who come to the U.S. on a temporary student visa to complete an undergraduate, graduate or professional degree and then return to their home countries (Institute of International Education- IIE, 2009).

Language- A system of words, meanings, symbols, gestures, and nonverbal communication for all features of a culture (Schaefer, 2002).

Middle East- the countries of parts of North Africa, Arabian Gulf, Middle East, and Turkey are considered a part of the modern Middle East (Middle East American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2012; CIA, 2012).

Multicultural education- Multicultural education as a concept and process refers to instructing students how to “recognize, accept, and appreciate differences in culture, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, special needs, and gender” (Manning & Baruth, 2009, p. 5).

Muslim- An individual who believes and declares, the Shahada “There is no God except Allah. And Mohammad is the messenger of God” and believes his or her duty is to give complete submission to will of God (i.e. Allah in Arabic) (Islamicity, 2011).

Narrative inquiry- Research method that explores participants' “stories of experiences” by gaining insight of their described lived experiences (Clandinin et al, 2006).

Pedagogy- A teaching towards learning which includes learning activities and negotiation of learning experiences (Robertson, Fluck, & Webb, 2003).

Prejudice- A negative perception of a group of individuals including racial or ethnic minorities (Schaefer, 2002).

Race- Bonilla-Silva (2009) argues that race is a social container of group affiliation whose key feature is social organization. He further provides that race is not a category. Rather, race is a method which can exclude a group or individual to become the other. Bonilla-Silva adds that race is a social construct while at the same time, it is a social reality. Thus, when race is constructed, it generates real outcomes to those individuals who are “racialized” in a race as “white” or “black” (Bonilla-Silva, 2009, p. 9).

Racism- In agreement with Ladson-Billings and Tate’s depiction of racism as beliefs that are culturally permitted that protect the privileges of white groups which exist due to inferior statuses of racial minorities (1995).

Racial group- A group that is separated from other groups due to its recognized physical differences (Schaefer, 2002).

Religion- A system of beliefs and practices based on sacred beliefs which people use to guide their everyday lives (Schaefer, 2002).

Religious beliefs- Expressions conducted by members of a religion in which they follow (Schaefer, 2002).

Rich, thick description- A detailed description of the participants and setting of a study which enables readers to transfer information to other situations or surroundings (Creswell, 2007).

Second language- Second language refers to “a language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue” (UNESCO, Cook, 2011, p. 12).

Society- A rather large number of individuals who live within the same region who practice common cultural traditions and are considered independent from individuals outside that region (Schaefer, 2002).

Stereotypes- Untrustworthy generalizations regarding a particular group that fails to acknowledge individual members’ differences within that group (Schaefer, 2002).

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VITA

Dr. Michelle Elaine Abualkhair was born and grew up in the Kansas City, Missouri area where she currently resides with her husband and four children. She attended a rural K-12 public school where she graduated high school with honors. She later completed her Associate of Arts degree in History at Longview Community College. In 2003, Dr. Abualkhair completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with honors from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. At this time, she decided to attend the University of Connecticut, where she was awarded the Master of Arts in Humanitarian Services Administration degree in 2007. She additionally attended one year of courses at Grand Canyon University under the Master of Arts in Education (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) program in 2007.

In the fall of 2008, Dr. Abualkhair entered the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program with Education Curriculum and Instruction serving as her primary discipline and the Social Science Consortium serving as her secondary discipline from the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC). While attending her doctoral studies at UMKC, Dr. Abualkhair served as a teacher's assistant for a multicultural education course. She was additionally employed as an adjunct professor for a graduate multicultural education course for UMKC. Upon completion of her doctoral degree requirements, Dr. Abualkhair works as an assistant professor for a major university while pursuing her research interests English as a second language instructional practices. Dr. Abualkhair is a member of the National Association of Multicultural Educators, Association of International Educators, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and Association for the Study of Higher Education.